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GAMEFAN

THE LAST TRUE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE



CANNON SPIKE
Explodes onto Dreamcast!!!

Final Fantasy IX
Square's Finest Hour?

The World is Not Enough
GoldenEye Killer?

Test Drive Le Mans
Better Than GT2000?

UFC on Dreamcast
Exclusive First Review!

plus:
Dynasty Warriors 2
Mort the Chicken
Metal Slug 3

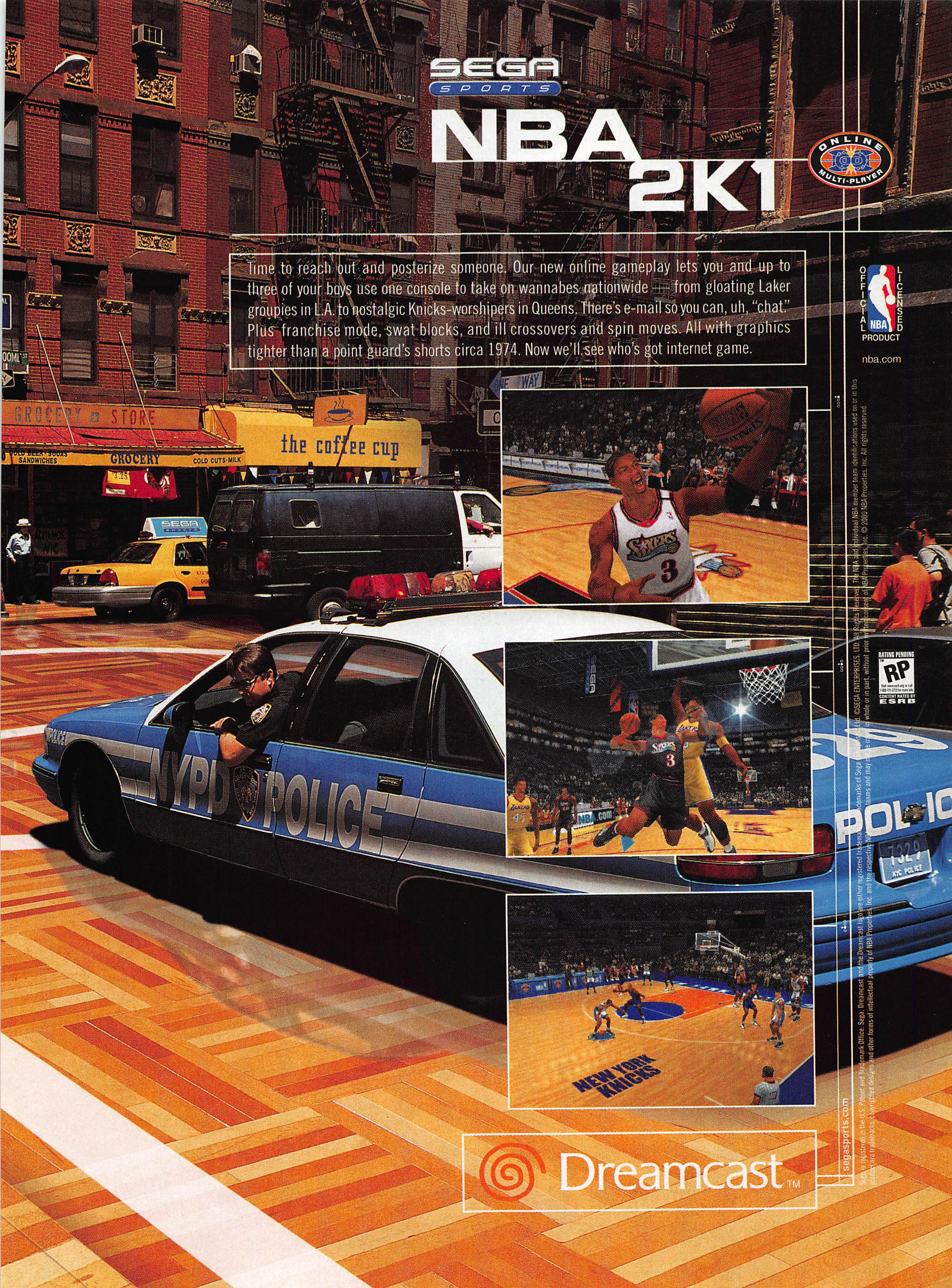
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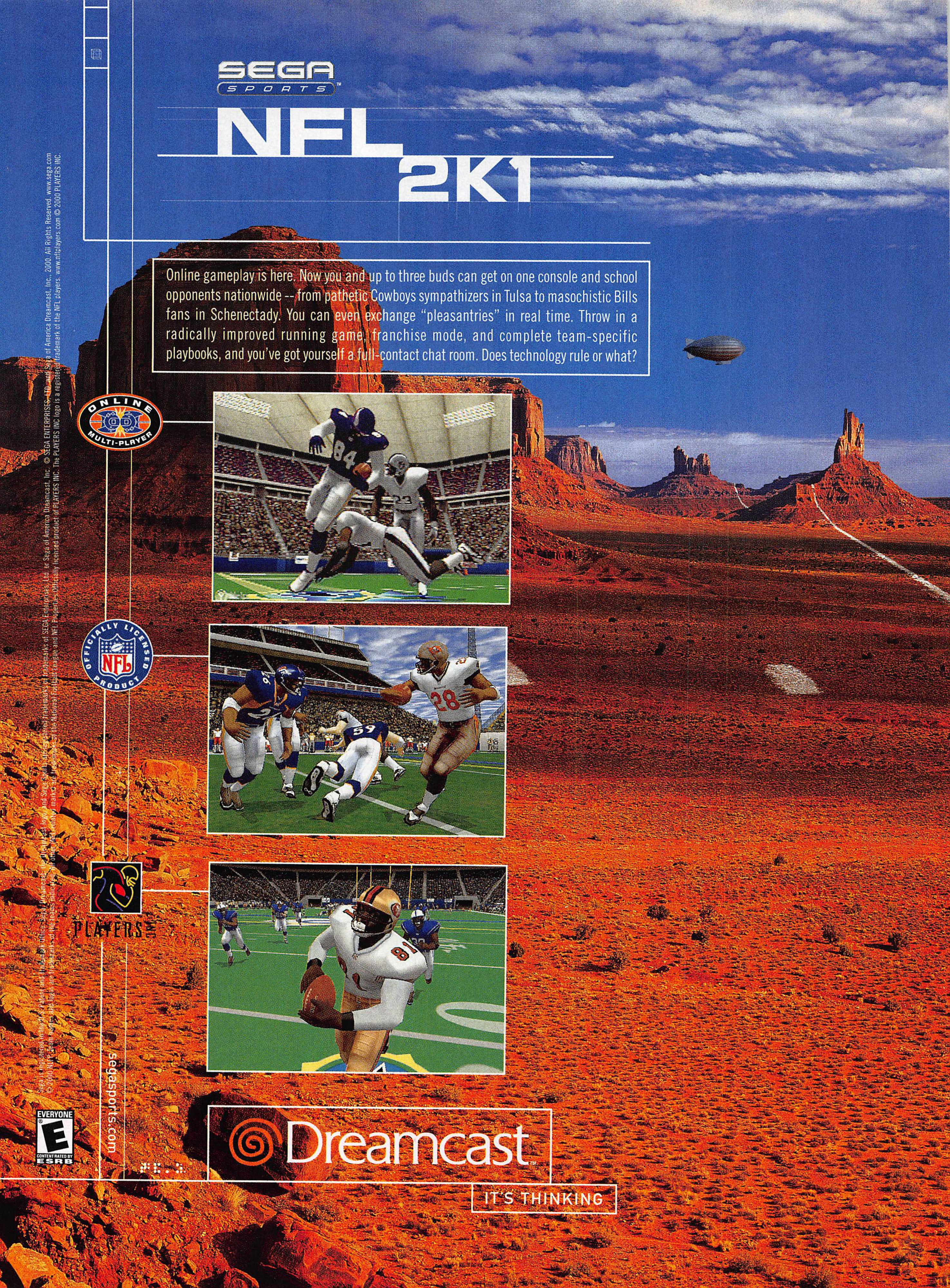

RAYMAN 2
PlayStation

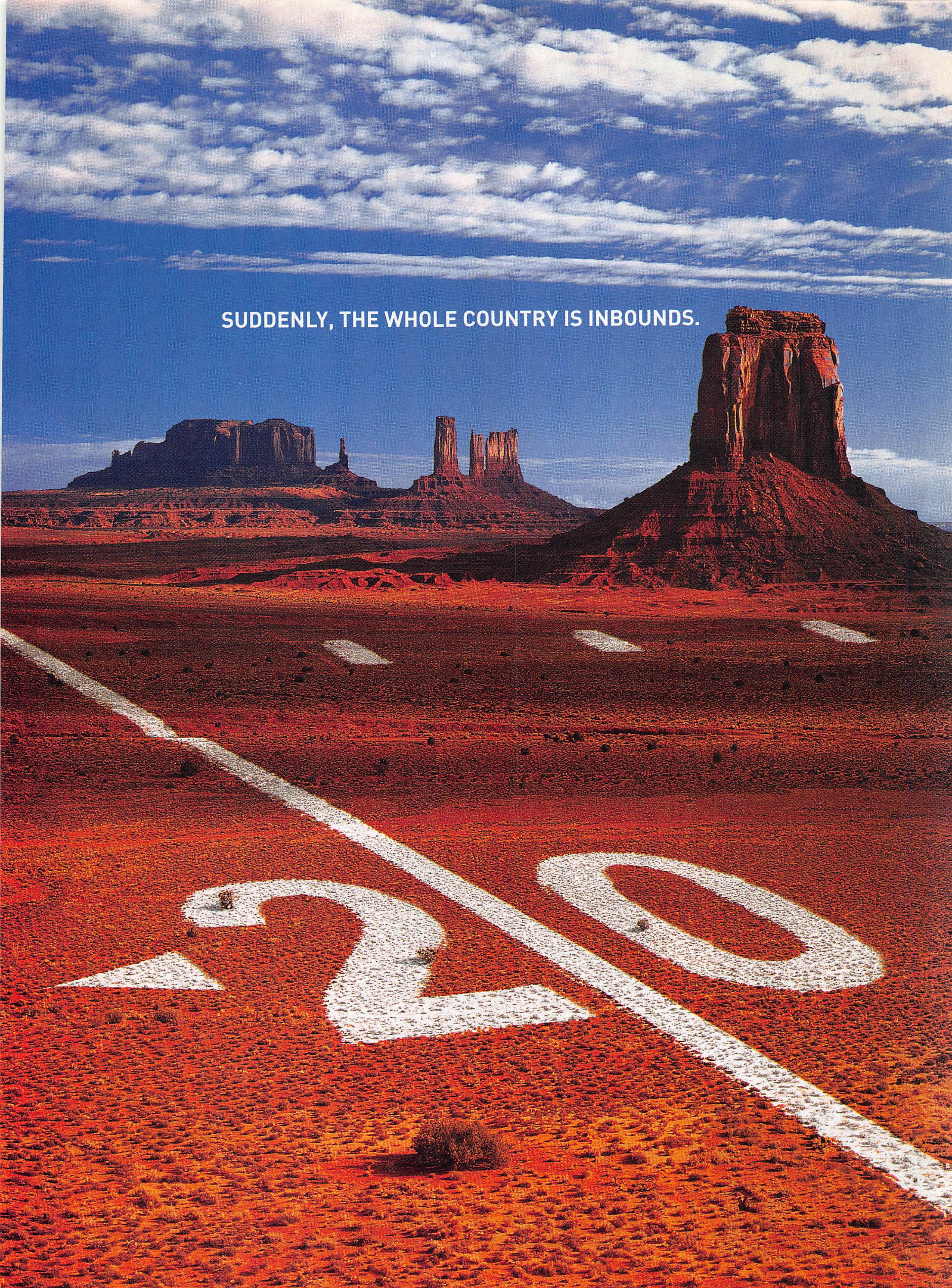


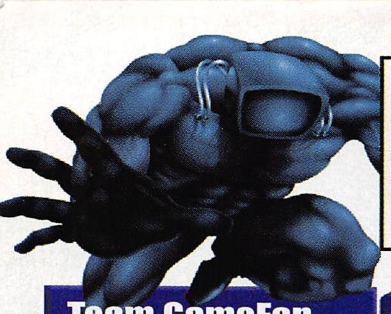
SONY
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RAYMAN
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ALSO AVAILABLE ON
EVERYONE
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Animated Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
NINTENDO64
Sega Dreamcast


THE COURT'S GOING TO BE A LITTLE
WIDER THIS SEASON.
ONE WAY
GROCERY


SEGA SPORTS
NBA 2K1
ONLINE MULTI-PLAYER
Time to reach out and posterize someone. Our new online gameplay lets you and up to three of your boys use one console to take on wannabes nationwide — from gloating Laker groupies in L.A. to nostalgic Knicks-worshipers in Queens. There's e-mail so you can, uh, "chat." Plus franchise mode, swat blocks, and ill crossovers and spin moves. All with graphics tighter than a point guard's shorts circa 1974. Now we'll see who's got internet game.
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Dreamcast


SEGA SPORTS
NFL 2K1
Online gameplay is here. Now you and up to three buds can get on one console and school opponents nationwide -- from pathetic Cowboys sympathizers in Tulsa to masochistic Bills fans in Schenectady. You can even exchange "pleasantries" in real time. Throw in a radically improved running game, franchise mode, and complete team-specific playbooks, and you've got yourself a full-contact chat room. Does technology rule or what?
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IT'S THINKING
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SUDDENLY, THE WHOLE COUNTRY IS INBOUNDS.
20



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ISSN# 1092-7212

Hey game stud... yeah **you**. The guy who's always bragging how he beat *Strider 2* in 25 minutes and waltzed though *Metal Slug 3* like it was a stroll through the park on a sunny Saturday afternoon. The same guy that writes game reviews for a living, claiming the aforementioned games (among others) are "too easy" and it would have rated higher had it not lasted "only a day." Yep, you're a ninja gamer, right? A Force unto yourself; a raging storm in a becalmed sea—hell, if Mike Tyson was still in lockdown (any bets as to when he's gonna make a return engagement?) he'd be your prison bitch, etc., etc. In fact, ain't no game gonna get you down, 'cause you're the best of the best, right? Ah, but there's a secret to your unfathomable might; your utter and complete domination over all things pixel-based; your Hercules-like strength and Mercury-like reflexes: ruler of gaming geeks great and small—you like to continue... a lot.

Does this sound familiar to you? A 'gaming journalist' (how's that for an oxymoron) telling you a game is too easy and it's over before it starts? Well we've all heard it since the days of the home Neo Geo when a Earlier Great Magazine (my, how things have changed over the years) used to rail the carts for that system because they were "too easy" due to infinite continues. Nowadays, though, you'll regularly hear both game editors and players prattle on at length over how 'little-bus easy' games are these days; how things just aren't as hard as they once were. Hey cellar dweller, here's an idea: Why don't you stop hitting the continue button like an under-sexed teen constantly flipping over to his newfound obsession, Skinemax... oh that's right, then **you'd** be the prison bitch.

I mean really, is it fair to say a game is too easy if you're constantly slapping the continue button every time you run out of lives? My guess is that if you're beating the credit button like a redheaded stepchild, you're probably not doing all that well—here's a tip: If you continue on the first stage, you suck. Or maybe, and here's a crazy idea, the game isn't all that **easy**. Yeah, shocking isn't it? I mean, imagine that: Mr. Tough Guy gamer really isn't that good at games... or maybe he's just too lazy. After all, playing games all day is rough work, you've got more important things to do than get a rewarding experience from a game, like surfing the 'Net or trolling eBay. Lord knows you're not working out or engaging in a meaningful exchange with the opposite sex—that would require skill, and, as we've already determined, you have none.

It's been said before, but today's gamer isn't cut from the same cloth as those of yesteryear—then again, I suppose it would have helped if you'd started playing games *prior* to PlayStation, right? Yep, back when a gamer was a gamer and the only thing he had to look forward to on Friday night was a date with Mario, a bag of Doritos and a six-pack of Mountain Dew—oh, and some of that Skinemax stuff. Nope, today's 'gamers' are a watered down, shrinky-dink version of the old school player. The one that spent his formative years lurking in dank cesspools (err, arcades), rental stores, and the mall, all on a Ryu-like quest to prove that he was the best of the best. Hell, some of us are still doing it... not me mind you, but that Eggo kid, whoa, did his parents neglect him or what: "Hey, baby Eggo, here's a cardboard box—we're going out."

Anyway, I'm reasonably certain this doesn't apply to the average GameFan reader, after all you guys (and gals) live and breathe games right? You were there when the Genesis and SNES launched; you buy imports; you beat games on a single credit (and if not, damn close), right? Just remember, the next time you read a review in some other mag or some nameless web site about how 'easy' a game is, remember these words: they probably suck.

Editorial Director
Eric Mylonas

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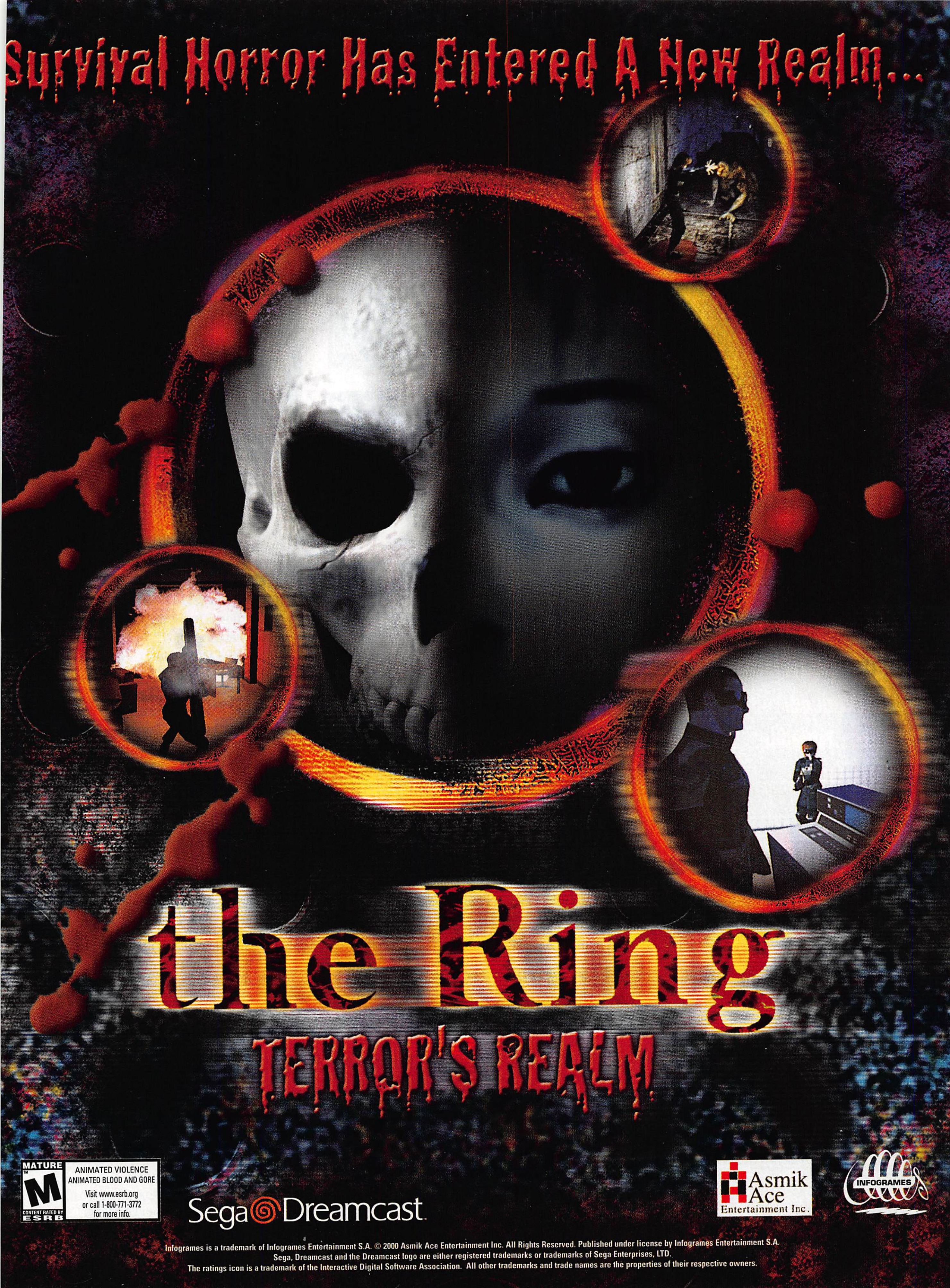

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

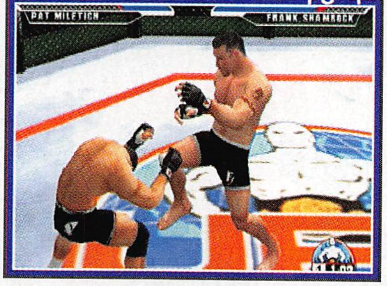
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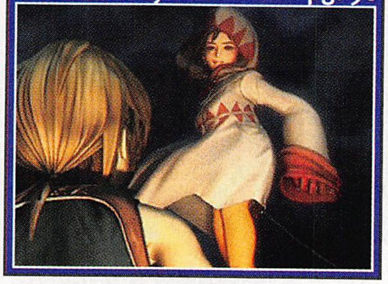
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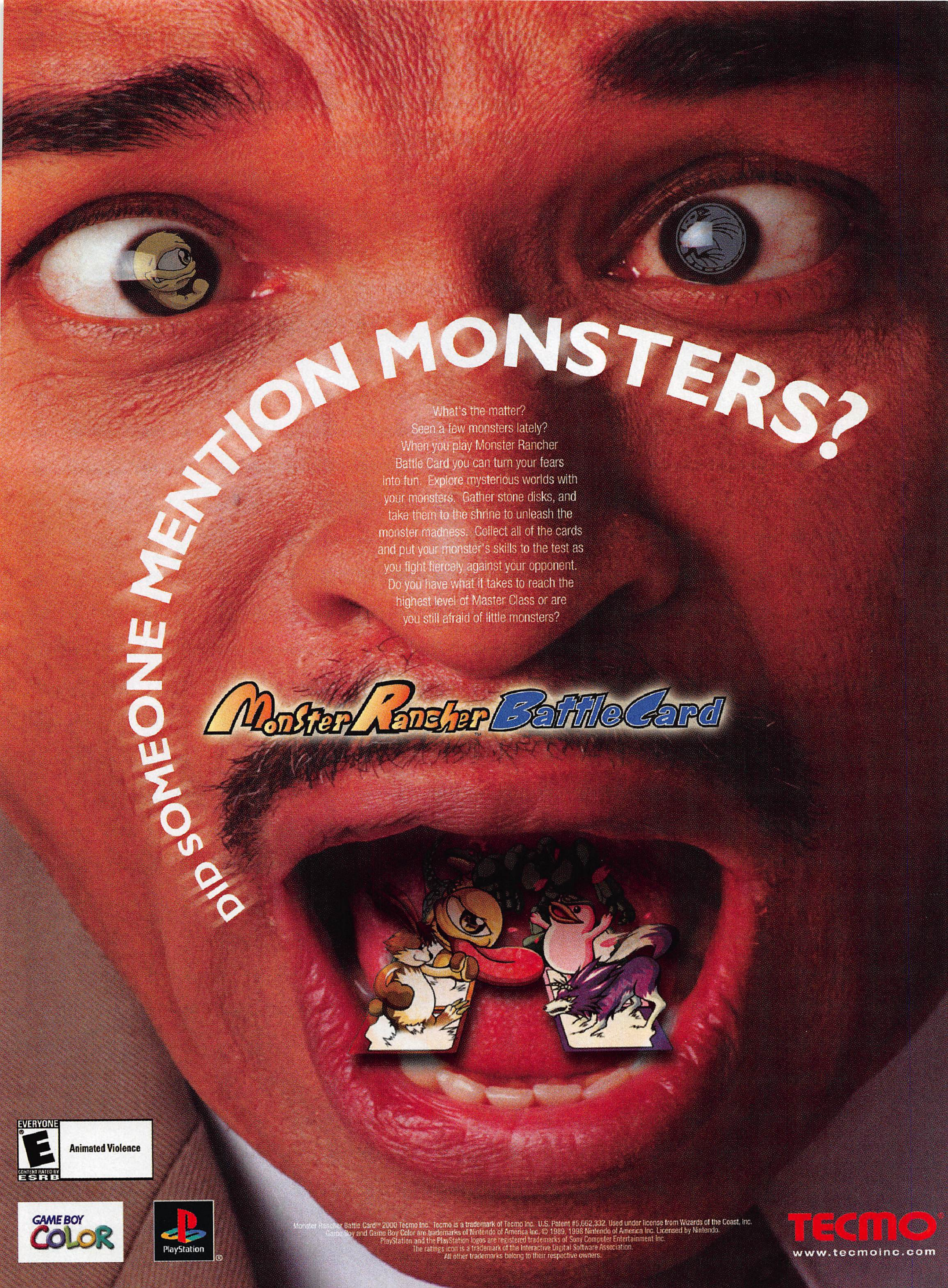








GAME INDEX



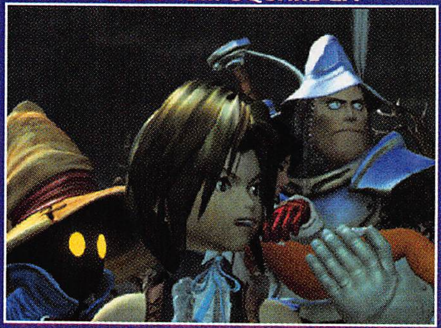
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When you play Monster Rancher Battle Card you can turn your fears into fun. Explore mysterious worlds with your monsters. Gather stone disks, and take them to the shrine to unleash the monster madness. Collect all of the cards and put your monster's skills to the test as you fight fiercely against your opponent. Do you have what it takes to reach the highest level of Master Class or are you still afraid of little monsters?
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TOP TEN MOST WANTED

October 2000

FINAL FANTASY IX

PUBLISHER: SQUARE EA



READER'S TOP TEN

1) *Virtua Tennis* - DC
2) *Legend of Mana* - PS
3) *Strider 2* - PS
4) *Perfect Dark* - N64
5) *Tony Hawk* - N64
6) *MvC 2* - DC
7) *Vagrant Story* - PS
8) *Kirby 64* - N64
9) *Virtual On* - DC
10) *Rayman 2* - DC

VIRTUA TENNIS



READER'S MOST WANTED

1) *Final Fantasy IX* - PS
2) *Grandia 2* - DC
3) *Tony Hawk 2* - PS
4) *Samba De Amigo* - DC
5) *Metal Gear Solid 2* - PS2
6) *Ecco: DotF* - DC
7) *Dino Crisis 2* - PS
8) *Turok 3* - N64
9) *Tekken Tag Tournament* - PS2
10) *Power Stone 2* - DC

GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN

*IMPORT TITLE



1) *Metal Slug 3* - Arcade
2) *Cannon Spike* - DC
3) *Mario Tennis* - N64
4) *Spiderman* - PS
5) *Strider 2* - PS
6) *Evolution* - NGPC
7) *AP Batrider** - Arcade
8) *Virtua Tennis* - DC
9) *King of Monsters 2* - Neo
10) *Darius Plus** - Super Grafx



1) *Jet Set Radio** - DC
2) *Tekken Tag Tourn.** - PS2
3) *Virtua Tennis* - DC
4) *Metal Slug 3* - Arcade
5) *Mario Tennis* - N64
6) *Cannon Spike* - DC
7) *Tokyo Xtreme Racer 2* - DC
8) *Front Mission 3* - PS
9) *X-Com UFO Defense* - PS
10) *MegaMan Legends 2* - PS



1) *Everquest* - PC
2) *Virtua Tennis* - DC
3) *Dark Wizard* - Sega CD
4) *Dynasty Warriors 2* - PS2
5) *Icewind Dale* - PC
6) *UFC* - DC
7) *Metal Slug 3* - Arcade
8) *Warlords Battle Cry* - PC
9) *Mario Tennis* - N64
10) *Surf Riders* - PS



1) *Diablo II* - PC
2) *Final Fantasy IX* - PS
3) *Legend of Dragoon* - PS
4) *Cannon Spike* - DC
5) *Vagrant Story* - PS
6) *Lunar: SSS* - Sega CD
7) *Star Parodier** - PC Engine Duo
8) *Virtua Tennis* - DC
9) *Star Wars Racer* - Arcade
10) *Space Taxi* - C64



1) *Jet Set Radio** - DC
2) *Cannon Spike* - DC
3) *Dynasty Warriors 2* - PS2
4) *UFC* - DC
5) *Metal Slug 3* - Arcade
6) *Silent Scope 2* - Arcade
7) *World is Not Enough* - N64
8) *Test Drive Le Mans* - DC
9) *Perfect Dark* - N64
10) *Virtua Tennis* - DC



1) *Unreal Tourn.* - Mac
2) *Virtua Tennis* - DC
3) *Metal Slug 3* - Arcade
4) *Gran Turismo 2* - PS
5) *Jet Set Radio** - DC
6) *Quake 3 Arena* - Mac
7) *SF Alpha 2* - Arcade
8) *World is Not Enough* - N64
9) *SF Alpha 3* - DC
10) *Super Punchout* - SNES

GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN MOST WANTED



- *Sonic Adventure 2* - DC
- *Dark Cloud* - PS2
- *Phantasy Star Online* - DC
- *Metal Gear Solid* - PS2
- *Dynasty Warriors 2* - PS2
- *Grandia 2* - DC
- *Cannon Spike* - Arcade
- *Skies of Arcadia* - DC
- *Munch's Oddysee* - PS2
- *Dragon Warrior VII* - PS

(IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

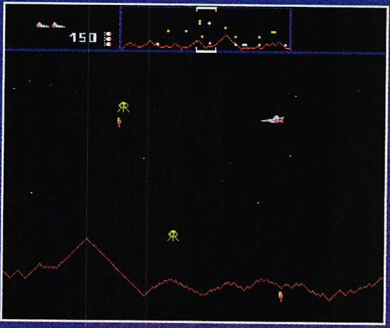
DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

THIS MONTH'S GUEST:
MARK CERNY
PRESIDENT, CERNY GAMES

My top ten games of all time (in historical order):

1. ***Defender*** (Arcade)
2. ***Robotron*** (Arcade)
3. ***Gauntlet*** (Arcade)
4. ***Dungeon Master*** (Atari 520ST—What happened to FTL, anyway?)
5. ***Sonic Adventure*** (Genesis)
6. ***F-Zero*** (SNES)
7. ***Star Control II*** (PC)
8. ***Bomberman*** (Neo Geo)
9. ***XCOM: UFO Defense*** (PC)
10. ***Legend of Dragoon*** (PSX)

DEFENDER



PUBLISHER: MIDWAY

Right now I've gotten totally obsessed with Table Tennis (a.k.a. Ping Pong) and am up by a score of 162 to 153 games in my six-month marathon match with Ryan at Insomiac (hah! still ahead!). It is a little weird not to be using a joystick to play a game, though...

EDITOR ROUNDUP

The topic of this month's Ed Zone was the shockingly low difficulty of games these days. Even eliminating crutches like infinite continues, it seems most games these days are not cut from the same cloth as tear-inducing games of yore like *Chakan*, so we asked each of our eds what was the last game that defeated them.

ecm@gamefan.com



ECM

ECM's one-man-versus-the-world shooter mentality clearly shows in his hasty reply: "Nothing! No game ever beats me!" But we don't even have to rewind back very far for an anecdote about a log in *Ninja* that had his name on it, do we?

ghiggins@gamefan.com



THE JUDGE

Star Trek Invasion made the Judge wave the white flag recently, with its difficult training mission. Of course, the second he called in the skill police, he was promptly shown up... but this is a man whose idea of "adventure" is fighting something that cons yellow to him.

eggo@gamefan.com



EGGO

Yet another training mode (this time, *Tenchu 2's*) was the cause behind Eggo's most recent tap-out... and in a genre (stealthy adventure) which he professes to have some skill in too... Bah! He should have his ninja gaming credentials revoked. Turn in your headband.

fury@gamefan.com



FURY

Fury is the king of surrender (he should join sides with the French), constantly crying for fact sheets on his games. But since our space is limited (and his failures too numerous to cite in one compendium), we leave you with this... He is *Frogger 2's* bitch.

kodomo@gamefan.com



KODOMO

Metal Slug 3... on one credit? Shaking his head, Kodomo says, "It's impossible!" with ringing finality. His psychological troubles lie much deeper than most. To give up on something before even trying... "That... is why you fail."



THE 6th MAN

The 6th Man rarely has trouble with a game, but then again, he has turned to the dark side. No, I'm not talking about delving into the mystical black arts which have been forbidden by our elders. His sin is far worse. There is no hope for one who uses... a Game Shark.

THE ART DEPARTMENT

tao@gamefan.com



TAO

The last game that Tao gave up on was *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*. What, a career in menial labor (i.e., monotonous block-pushing and pulling) not your idea of a good time in a video game?

Coming Soon

These guys' characters still aren't done... But that doesn't mean they won't be worth the wait. We can share this much... Sketch's character is rumored to 'float.' What that means, you decide...

PRODUCTIVITY KILLER OF THE MONTH



Mario Tennis

Height: n/a
Weight: n/a
Blood Type: O
Special Abilities: The Donkey Kong Deluxe

OK, we've officially got problems here. Two tennis games (*Virtua Tennis* being the other) in a row, resulting in two productivity killers? Either it's just a freak occurrence... or it's a silent commentary on the sorry state of the game industry when not one, but **two** tennis games end up as favorites in our game-playing rotation.

When you mention that Camelot (*Hot Shots Golf, Mario Golf*) was the developer behind this one, however, it all becomes clear. *Mario Tennis* is simply fun in a bottle. Combine that with Nintendo's comical characters and a foundation of rock solid gameplay, and you've got a pinnacle among tennis games.

I'm sure Camelot didn't foresee players betting on the outcome of matches or talking trash about how "my Donkey Kong's gonna wipe the floor with you, Princess (Peach)!" This probably isn't what they had in mind, but what it all comes down to is this: given the choice, we'd rather play *Mario Tennis* than 95% of the games out there right now. Wouldn't you?

This month in GameFan's BOX-O-FUN!

Evolution of a PlayStation

The PlayStation is the only console which has different evolutionary stages in its life cycle. Observe...

It begins in its natural supine state, just out of the box, as the console is classically portrayed.

After run-ins with a few games like *Resident Evil* and *Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen*, the PS begins to develop a chronic cough. Annoyingly, dialogue starts to sputter. To remedy the problem, the console is flipped 180 degrees to a prone position.

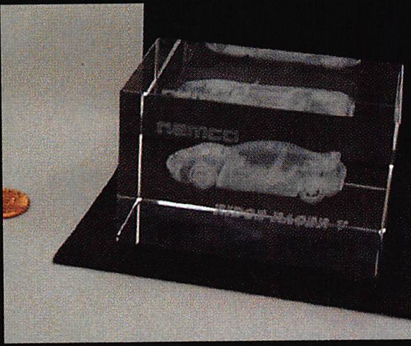
Final Fantasy VII's loading is the next offender, as it calls for more drastic maneuvers such as the highly uncomfortable perpendicular 'handplant' placement.

The straw that broke the camel's back is *Monster Rancher*, which not only loaded frequently, but also featured the 'cool idea' of constantly swapping discs in and out to generate new monsters! Great innovation... at the cost of shaving years off your PlayStation's life.

After one too many games that continually stream data, we see the PlayStation in its final resting state... $99 later, the cycle begins anew (see top).

CHICKEN OF THE MONTH

Namco's... car... thing



We're not exactly sure what this nifty piece of chicken is... but it looks cool doesn't it? It's like a cross between a ghost car in *Ridge Racer* and an insect that's been preserved in tree sap for millions of years. Other than the obvious use for it (i.e., to bludgeon someone to death for stupid comments like "*Strider 2* is too easy because of those damned infinite continues!"), this car... thing serves as a great paperweight or desk ornament. So it's not the most useful piece of chicken we've seen... at least it has aesthetic merits and is a conversation starter... sort of.

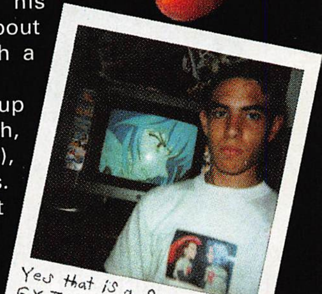
Trust us, if you had one of these, it would be sitting front and center on your desk, the showpiece of your entire working area. So companies—if you're listening—while we normally ask for practical swag, we also give high marks for **originality** (so we don't want to see a skateboard dude doing a handplant in a glass paperweight for *THPS2*) and plain old good looks.

SAUSAGE OF THE MONTH





Anyone who writes in saying, "I have played PlayStation RPG's for over 12 hours straight at one time, then my eye's felt kind of weird" deserves the distinction of being Sausage of the Month. In addition to being an "extreme hard core gamer," 17-year-old Chris Couty also enjoys watching anime (Neon Genesis Evangelion being his favorite), and he defends concerns about the nudity and violence therein with a single statement: "That's anime."



Yes that is a Samsung GX TV!

Lastly, Chris wanted the hook-up with a former Sausage of the Month, Kelly (from our April 2000 issue), whose 'artwork' he really admires. Actually, Chris, you're not the first person to write in asking about a female SotM... but we're sorry. This is *GameFan*, not a singles paper.

If you're an attractive, hard-core female gamer and would like thousands of geeks drooling over you (or even if you're an ugly guy, we'll think about it), send your picture and hard-core history to Posty's mailing address, and you too could be Sausage of the Month.


THE DEMON
THE BEASTKING
"A wildly original game world, and some of the most frenetic action seen to date."
–NextGen Magazine, February 2000
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VIEWPOINT











G — Graphics
C — Control
P — Play Mechanics
M — Music
O — Originality



Cannon Spike
Dreamcast
Capcom
Shooter
Reviewed page 20

Wow, they actually let me write a viewpoint. Most of the time when I offer my opinion they tell me to shut up and go play *EverQuest* (and I'm not complaining). I am stoked though, because I like being able to add my two cents. *CS* is nothing more than an updated *Robotron* with top notch graphics and Capcom characters. I mean this in the best possible way. You take the gameplay and control of *Robotron* and make it look this sweet, you have gold.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 9 — **94**

After playing through *Gunbird 2*, I was really hoping developer Psikyo would find a home on the DC. But never did I imagine that they'd team up with Capcom... how unbelievably cool is this? Imagine *Super Smash Bros.* on steroids, starring a cast of gorgeously rendered Capcom heroes. Sounds pretty cool, huh? Wait till you play it! Rock solid control mixed with intense combat and awesome weapon variety makes *CS* a must buy for shooter/action fans.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 9 — **96**

Open and shut, nothing but quality cut. Seriously, Capcom brings yet another AAA title to the DC. Great visuals and phenomenal gameplay. The difficulty of the game harkens back to the days of old (as gameplay does to *Robotron* and *Smash TV*), but that only makes it better. Dump the DC pad, buy an arcade stick (right after a one month supply of food), and deleve deep into the world of console bliss. Go MegaMan!

G 10 C 8 P 10 M 8 O 9 — **96**



Disney MTRacing
Dreamcast
Eidos
Racing

On the one hand you have PS ports such as *Tomb Raider*. On the other, *Le Mans Racing*—and somewhere in the middle lie games like *MTR*. While it's clear that it has strong PS roots it's also clear that the guys at Crystal must have spent more than 15 minutes on it, which for most PS-to-DC projects is really saying something. It's (very) fast, playable and overall pretty decent. Good or bad, it's the best cart racer on DC yet.

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 5 O 5 — **78**

I'll say this much, *DMTR* is FAST on Dreamcast! In a racing game, that's always a good thing. The Disney worlds are also kinda cool to race in for a few minutes, even though the overly happy songs aren't designed for extended sitting sessions (nothing worse than getting "A Pirate's Life" stuck in your head because of a game... Ack!). I'm just not excited about seeing yet "another racing game" on Dreamcast... or any console.

G 8 C 7 P 6 M 8 O 7 — **77**

I was fully expecting Eidos to give *DMR* the basic Dreamcast upgrade—hi-res graphics and better textures. While the former is certainly true, I wasn't at all expecting the game's newfound speed. My god this game is ridiculously fast! And if you're guessing that won't translate over to the multiplayer features, think again—I have **never** seen a cart game move at this speed in split-screen two-player mode. Throw in a little Pirates of the Caribbean, and I'm hooked!

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 10 O 8 — **80**



Ecco: DotF
Dreamcast
Sega
Adventure

As the world's biggest *Ecco* fan (believe it) it pains me to say things didn't work out in Sega's favor. Yes, the graphics, music, and story are stunning. Yes, the game is a testament to what the DC can muster. But in a nutshell, 6 degrees of freedom undid our little buddy. The control takes **a lot** of getting used to, and the vague missions don't help. This is the single most disappointing DC game *ever* and I think I might just cry...

G 10 C 6 P 5 M 9 O 9 — **79**

I did not 'get' the original *Ecco* games. I didn't see the fascination with jumping through the air or 'hunting' for the game with heavy exploration. Now, we've got a 128-bit incarnation which is simply gorgeous (it's like *NFL2K*, see it from across the room and you'd think this was TV), but the gameplay is still a bit sketchy and ambiguous to me. Plus, the controls (now that everything is 3D) make maneuvering slightly more difficult.

G 10 C 6 P 6 M 8 O 9 — **80**

While I spent most of the original Ecco just doing tricks in the first pool, I certainly developed an affinity for the game that has carried over. While not the Ecco for the millenia that I hoped it would be, *Ecco:DOTF* is still an enjoyable title, despite its sometimes awkward control and loose missions. This game has some of the most gorgeous graphics I have ever seen and enough atmosphere for 5 games. Alas, it isn't Ed's *Ecco*, though...

G 10 C 7 P 6 M 9 O 9 — **88**



Frogger 2
Dreamcast
Hasbro
Platform
Reviewed page 48

Frogger 2 is like a cross between the original arcade game and a puzzle game, and it's not afraid to kill you without a moment's notice. I consider this total disregard for a gamers' welfare a challenge, especially in today's world of "all too easy" games (there must be a little sadomasochism in me to say this). Because of that, I admire *Frogger 2* to a degree. While I wouldn't recommend a purchase, it's amusing for a day or so.

G 6 C 5 P 6 M 7 O 7 — **72**

Frogger is one game that I wish would have remained in the annals of arcade history. Perhaps my lack of timing keeps me weary of stepping back into the role of the amphibian who crossed the road, but it also doesn't help that *Swampy's Revenge* doesn't even utilize an ounce of the DC's power. But I suppose, what we get here is better than some poor *Frogger 3D* platformer. Personally, I'd rather save the twitchy gameplay for a shooter.

G 5 C 6 P 5 M 4 O 7 — **63**

Some ideas age well and deserve upgrades... and then there's *Frogger*. The orginal game (which is included) was limited in gameplay, and this moderate upgrade changes many things. You now have to collect items in a fully 3D enviornment (known 'round these parts as 'sheer tedium'), and can do special moves and attacks. Why does every single old school game (good or bad) need an upgrade? Oh yeah, I remember now, it's for the cash.

G 6 C 7 P 6 M 4 O 5 — **66**



Sega GT
Dreamcast
Sega
Racing
Reviewed page 46

This is the part where I tell you, the reader, how much I dislike 'technical' racers (*Gran Turismo* et al) and how much I love arcade racers (*Daytona, Super GT, TXR*): Yeah folks, I don't really like *Sega GT*. It's too much of a 'gearhead' sim and I prefer my 400+ hp beasties already tuned and ready to go. It looks good, and the sensation of speed is OK, but it just isn't my cup o' tea. Fury, on the other hand, would turn himself into a rim if he could.

G 8 C 6 P 6 M 5 O 5 — **73**

Yay... more racing. Thank you, sir. May I have another? There was a time when *Sega GT* was the graphical benchmark by which all racing games were measured. That time has come and gone with the advent of *Tokyo Xtreme Racer 2*, which has better car models and control. While still an impressive game that can hang with even the best racers Sony's PS2 has to offer, this game is still only second best on Dreamcast.

G 9 C 6 P 7 M 7 O 7 — **82**

Can you say *Gran Turismo* on Dreamcast? Yup, the folks at Sega in-house weren't content with Poliphony Digital stealing all the tuning sim praise. And while *Sega GT* strives to provide a reasonable blend of quality graphics, real life control, and stunning track side detail, it sadly does it at a price—the game's speed. Perhaps if the ultra fast *TXR2* weren't available, I wouldn't be so put off by *GT's* modest sense of speed. Now where's *Super GT*?

G 9 C 7 P 9 M 8 O 4 — **84**

Okay, since I'm the limey around here, it's no surprise that I actually like a Rally game, right? Well, thing is, *TDVR* actually holds its own against *Sega Rally 2*, and throws in a few jabs for good order. A massive amount of courses and more options than I thought possible (track editor, yay!), show that the French know what good action is. My only concern is some dodgy control, but *TDVR*'s still near the front of the pack.

G 9 C 7 P 9 M 9 O 9 — **91**

While racing games have a tendency to glut a console and lack any semblance of creativity, *V-Rally* still manages to add a little life to this uninspired genre. While all you need nowadays to ship a racing title is a realistic physics engine and a couple of licenses, *V-Rally* rises to the top by implementing some of the best graphics and frame rate of any racing sim. The easy to use track editor scores huge points, as well.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 7 — **87**

One of the best looking racing games out there. It's plenty fast and the frame-rate blazes as well. Unfortunately, I'm not really into rally games, and if there's one genre which the Dreamcast has an overabundance of, it's racing games. If I had to choose between this and *Sega Rally*, I'd choose *Test Drive* for the better frame-rate and feeling of speed. However, since I don't spend a lot of time with racers normally, I'd stick to renting it.

G 9 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 7 — **83**



Test Drive V-Rally
Dreamcast
Infogrames
Racing

Welcome to the land of UFC, please check your teeth at the door. Wow, now this is a pleasant one. *UFC* has the deepest grappling system since the *Tobal* series (a good place to be!), and enough flying fists and feet to satisfy anybody. How many games let you pin somebody and either a) pound the snot out of them or b) bend a limb so far they tap out? Sure, it's not *Tekken Tag* or *MVC2*, but it's fun to play, unique and looks amazing.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 9 — **88**

I regret passing up this one at E3, thinking it nothing more than a licensed cash run. But *UFC* is nothing like that. It's a great game which could easily stand on its own merits without this fantastic license. Great graphics, solid play mechanics (in and out of the mount), and lots of rabbit punches to the back of the head. I only wish I could play my personal UFC favorites: Tank Abbot, Royce Gracie, and Dan Severn. Watch as I close the distance...

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 9 — **90**

Well, well, let's all bow down and pay homage to the lads at Anchor—these guys know how to code (they also did the 'you'll never see it in the USA,' *Toy Fighter*). Stunning graphics, solid, complex gameplay (not *VF3* complex, mind you) makes for a very playable, very impressive DC outing from Crave. I'd even go so far as to say it's the best American-published fighting game in years. Now I can hand Kodomo some of my Shaolin style...

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 8 — **91**



UFC
Dreamcast
Crave
Fighting
Reviewed page 42

Let's get this straight... I'm not into wrestling, and tuned out just after the Iron Sheik joined the scene (yes, I'm that old...). However, *WWF RR* is moderately fun, especially when you start up the 4-player mode. All the goofy side action also makes an appearance, so you can break chairs on people. If you like your 'wrasslin' fast and furious <shudder>, you could certainly do worse than a *Toukon Retsuden*-engined, arcade slam-fest.

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 7 O 7 — **77**

The graphics in *Royal Rumble* are nice, with some cool hit effects thrown in, but when you keep in mind that it was originally developed on Naomi, things get a bit disappointing. And then out of nowhere, multiple wrestlers start filling the screen... and they just keep coming until the entire ring is packed full with bodies—this is where the game gets cool! If it can keep my interest for a bit, considering that I don't even like wrestling, something must be right.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 7 — **82**

Admittedly, there's a certain "Hulk Smash" appeal about this game which has been lacking with most wrestling titles these days. Maybe it's the entertaining carnage that ensues when eight guys inhabit the same cramped space and start beating each other up. Or maybe it's the arcade-like simplicity (not being bogged down by create-a-wrestler/pay-per-view features). *WWF RR* is fun... for an arcade-like wrestling game.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 8 — **76**



WWF Royal Rumble
Dreamcast
THQ
Wrestling
Reviewed page 45

Holy Hell! Want to know what sub-par developers do on the weekend (or after generous amounts of alcohol...), check out *Breakout*. This is not a good PlayStation game, and left me scratching my head. Horrid control (both analog and digital) aside, there is so very little to enjoy about the game. Do you really want to forego other quality games to bounce balls at sheep? It ain't *Criticom* or *Crow: City of Angels*... but it just isn't fun.

G 4 C 5 P 4 M 6 O 5 — **45**

A rubbery red stick with eyes sneaking around like *Solid Snake*? Anyway... I'm slightly amused by the 'plot' but that's not as important as the gameplay. *Breakout* is a better example of what I'd like to see Hasbro do with these classic Atari games. Spruce 'em up a little with nice play mechanic additions such as multi-ball and different targets (chickens, like monkeys in a video game, are always good). Will we ever see another *Rampart*?

G 5 C 6 P 7 M 8 O 8 — **72**

Oh Hasbro, why why why?! Why do you take perfectly, well, perfect concepts and then apply your dreaded upgrade 'formula' to them (I guess all that money from *Frogger* went to their head). Needless to say this is another butchered classic, a title to join the updated *Centipede* and *Pong* (among others past and future) in infamy. Polygons and *Breakout*... that's like chocolate and peanut butter... oh wait, that's actually good.

G 4 C 4 P 5 M 5 O 4 — **40**



Breakout
PlayStation
Hasbro
Action
Reviewed page 58

After sitting down for a few minutes with *DDR*, I've got to wonder... who the hell is buying these games?! Everything about this one screams first generation, and of course, the very fact that Midway is actually pumping money into this long time suffering franchise is unbelievable in the first place. If you've played the original *DD*, leave it at that. The changes in this sequel are so minute that you'd never notice them in the first place.

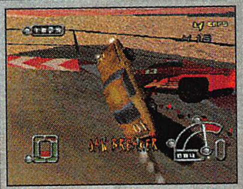
G 5 C 6 P 4 M 5 O 3 — **58**

I don't know what hurt more: Kodomo banging his head against the wall for three days playing this game... or me sitting there watching it. Whoever's buying games like this has to be stopped. Go spend your money on some moonshine or a plane ticket to Chicago to see a live taping of Jerry Springer. The only redeeming quality about *DDR* is the rooftop battles, and even *Twisted Metal* did that better. Bad graphics, gameplay, idea... period.

G 5 C 6 P 3 M 5 O 6 — **58**

What the hell?! It's not bad enough that it's virtually impossible to look at PS games these days, let alone get close enough to play them and DDR isn't helping. This series was **never** good, and I have never, ever (not even a little) understood the appeal. If you're a redneck that enjoys poor control and bad graphics then by all means your game has arrived. Start praying now that this series doesn't make the leap to PS2.

G 4 C 5 P 3 M 3 O 3 — **43**



Destruction Derby Raw
PlayStation
Midway
Car Combat
Reviewed page 54

Surprisingly, I'm left pretty satisfied with Hasbro's *Galaga* update. It fuses enough of the game's old elements with some new head-on shooting sequences (a la *Panzer Dragoon*) to provide fans a quality experience. The new visuals are also a cool sight, but I don't know if there's enough overall to warrant a purchase. Fact is, if you're considering buying this game, you better be a serious *Galaga*-head. If not, things will get old fast!

G 6 C 7 P 6 M 5 O 6 — **70**

While I'm all for innovation in video games (the last thing we need is **another** *Tomb Raider* on PS...), *Galaga: Destination Earth* doesn't take things in a positive direction. I can understand how the idea of horizontally scrolling and *StarFox*-like sequences sounded good on paper, but they're not very fun in actuality. The classic *Galaga* sequences are marred by explosions which look like bullets. Very, very non-entertaining. Take your money elsewhere.

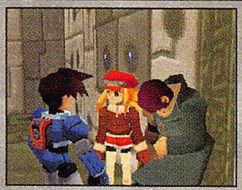
G 4 C 6 P 5 M 5 O 8 — **53**

Let me tell ya something: I'm all for 'updating' classics as long as you don't mess with the thing that made them 'classic' in the first place: gameplay. PS *Asteroids* and *Space Invaders* (not to mention *Tempest 2000*) all pulled off remakes with flair and respect; *G:DE* did not. I have to wonder if Hasbro gets off mucking around with games that were nearly perfect to begin with. Somebody at Namco should be whipped for allowing this.

G 3 C 5 P 4 M 4 O 6 — **47**



Galaga: Destination Earth
PlayStation
Hasbro
Shooter
Reviewed page 58



MegaMan Legends 2
PlayStation
Capcom
Adventure
Reviewed page 56

As much as it pains me to say, I liked the first *MML* (there, I said it, can I go now?). The super-solid environs, crisp frame rate and amusing, whimsical gameplay drew me in (not to mention a bizarre fixation with Data, the tit monkey—I just love that little guy!). While *Tron Bonne* was OK (wha?! No *MegaMan*? Pass...), this is a worthy follow-up to MM's first 3D outing. It's been said before, but I'm a Capcom whore—now gimme *Mars Matrix*.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 **89**

I didn't like the first *Mega Man Legends* much. While this version looks slightly better, I still don't support MegaMan's decision to go 3D in this case. The pace is slowed down so much by rotating camera angles and drawn out storylines that I just can't get into this game. I would much rather play *Mega Man X5*, in which there's constant action, platforming, and sprites. I'm not against 3D games if they're faithful and done right. Alas, this is not.

G 7 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 7 **71**

Can you believe it, three *MegaMan* games in one issue! While I prefer the blue wonder's antics of yesteryear (it's all about the *Wiley Wars*) *Legends 2* is certainly a nice diversion from the non-stop *Rockman* platformers released in Japan (can't believe I just said that). Though the graphics appear similar to the original *Legends* game, the new quests are definitely a blast to take on. But Capcom... why MM's new look?

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 7 **84**



Parasite Eve 2
PlayStation
Square EA
Adventure

Argh... as if we don't get enough *RE* from *RE*. Then again, seeing as how I didn't like the first *PE*, anything's an improvement, right? Wrong. If you're gonna ape Capcom's style do it with... style. Unfortunately, unless you're a Square whore (wave to the nice people, Eggo) you probably won't find too much to get worked up over here. Sure, the game looks decent, and hey, there's always the CG, right? Right?! I'll pass, thanks.

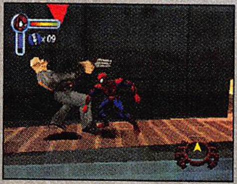
G 7 C 6 P 6 M 6 O 7 **68**

I never understood why *PE2* had to be more like *Resident Evil* than the first game. Aren't there enough *RE* clones out there? Forsaking innovation for the beaten path, Square's sequel to the first cinematic RPG is a pleasant (albeit short) diversion, but I still prefer the dramatic sequences of the first game. A climax should be the Statue of Liberty falling or a rooftop exploding... not a silly shower scene.

G 8 C 6 P 8 M 7 O 5 **84**

While I fully applaud Capcom for changing things up in a sequel for a change, sometimes it's better to leave things unchanged. While you can still modify weaponry and create lethal combinations, you now have auto-aiming, real time fights that only stop when you use Aya's magic. Don't get me wrong, it's still a good game (full of quality CG and other nice touches), but *PE2* does not continue the 'Cinematic RPG' mantra as well as I'd hoped.

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 8 **79**



Spiderman
PlayStation
Activision
Action

My beloved *Apocalypse* engine (I had to tell Kodomo that) returns! This blazing, super-fast PS engine has powered some hot games and now you can add the Sorta-amazing *Spiderman*™ to it. It's a fun game, but the control can be very grating at times—just wait till they reverse on ya when you're scaling a wall or ceiling. Some camera trouble and some irritating Spidey glibness don't help, but still, tis a fun little romp, true believer.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 9 **87**

Activision's better half this month (*Tenchu 2* being the other), *Spiderman* feels like a cross between the sneaky *Tenchu* and the campy, live-action "Spiderman" TV series. The camera takes some getting used to and spins frequently, but the play mechanics are well thought out and the directing is top notch, with Stan Lee adding to the atmosphere. I wish Spidey would shut up at times, and the character models could be better.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 8 O 8 **82**

Wow, Activision uses the *Apocalypse* engine again, and the results are better yet. Okay, so *Spidey* isn't going to set the world on fire with its visuals, but it does a great job bringing the webhead home. With a true 'go anywhere' style, new attacks/techniques and comic book charisma (narrated by Stan 'The Man' Lee), you should give it a go. Although the control is a bit touchy (with the camera turning too much), it's a great game.

G 8 C 6 P 9 M 8 O 9 **85**



Tenchu 2
PlayStation
Activision
Adventure
Reviewed page 52

OK, I didn't like the first *Tenchu* but I could kinda appreciate why some did ("All that sneaking around... just cut their bloody throats!"). I don't know what happened here, but even those that adored the first are gonna have some serious problems this time. I do like the new moves (hiding corpses is fun!), but the limited sight distance, poor graphics and hacked-up gameplay (see Eggo's review for the ugly details) killed this for me.

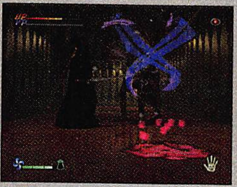
G 5 C 4 P 5 M 5 O 7 **60**

Egad, you call this a sequel?! Not only are the visuals in *Tenchu 2* atrocious, the camera is beyond busted! I unfortunately was saddled with grabbing screen shots of Activison's stealthy ninja update, so I can tell you first-hand, playing this game is a serious lesson in frustration. Do yourself a favor, and stay far from *Tenchu 2*. And for fans of the original, best leave those memories untainted. Hey Activision, do us a favor and kill this engine!

G 5 C 5 P 7 M 6 O 6 **65**

Egads! While I was heavily into the first *Tenchu* (heartily trying to be *Ninja Scroll* on a good day!), this is a giant step backwards. While most of the core gameplay returns, the graphics have regressed. The actual sphere of sight is small, yeilding massive pop-up, and destroying any sensation of immersion. Sure a few new moves help, such as dragging bodies around, but having to draw a weapon each time just blows. I'll stick with the original.

G 5 C 5 P 6 M 7 O 5 **65**



Vampire Hunter D
PlayStation
Jaleco
Adventure

Like a B-movie with no budget but lots of personality, *Vampire Hunter D* is a bad game which I adore. It's *Resident Evil* with worse camera angles, graphics, and control. But before you write it off entirely, realize that it also has a much better theme, story, and voice acting. There's also some strategy to the fighting. This game could've been great if it had better graphics and tweaked control. If you're bored, rent it for a few days.

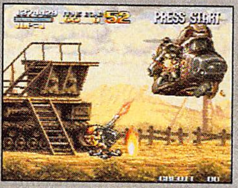
G 5 C 5 P 7 M 6 O 7 **78**

Being a huge fan of the *Vampire Hunter D* anime, I was really jazzed when Jaleco announced a game was in the works. But I'm not sure I dig this whole *Resident Evil*-style setup. I mean it just seems that this would be a perfect outlet for a *Castlevania* style title. Can you imagine *Symphony of the Night* with Yoshitaka Amano character designs?! Sadly, the game just doesn't seem to match the tension and excitement of the cartoon.

G 6 C 6 P 6 M 7 O 8 **72**

Hey, look! It's *Resident Evil* with vampires. No, wait, that was *Countdown Vampires*, this is something much, much worse. Imagine pre-rendered backgrounds, polygonal characters and legions of the undead chasing you at every turn (told ya it was *RE*). Bad camera angles, repetitive music, a plot torn from the first Conan movie and simply lame gameplay punctuate yet another liscense gone bad. Hey, at least it's not *Macross* bad...

G 6 C 5 P 5 M 4 O 0 **51**



Metal Slug 3
Arcade
SNK
Action
Reviewed page 98

Metal Slug 3 has it all: mind-blowing animation, old school gameplay, and that zany sense of humor. Even the finest details are excruciatingly well-animated, and there's multiple paths to explore. This is the best arcade game of the past four years (since *SF Alpha 2*). If you haven't been to an arcade in a while, it's worth the trip just to experience *Metal Slug 3* from start to finish. Play it, and I guarantee you will laugh, have fun, and love it.

G 10 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 7 **96**

Here's a perfect example of a game that is as much fun to watch as it is to play. I say that because there is so much going on in *MS3* that you just need to sit back to take in all the animation. Everything has tons of detail, the variety of enemies is stunning and the control is dead on! Sadly, to play this masterpiece, it won't come cheap. The difficulty will leave arcade players broke by level 4 and for all those importing the cart... can I borrow a few bucks?

G 10 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 9 **98**

If you're going to go out, go out at the top and with style. *MS3* is by far one of the best quarter crunchers to surface in some time. While most of the weapons have been seen before, a few (such as the notable 'flying airplanes') are new. Combine that with even more vehicles to ride (ostrich, submarine, mech) and multiple paths, not to mention rock solid control and a hilarious storyline, and you've got the best game on the aged MVS system.

G 10 C 9 P 10 M 9 O 10 **97**


In Your Face Terror
Now experience terror in first person perspective.
Introducing Resident Evil Survivor.
MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
Animated Blood and Gore
PlayStation
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RESIDENT EVIL
SURVIVOR
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CANNON SPIKE

What happens when Capcom (ECM's favorite third party publisher) and Psikyo (my favorite shooter developer) collaborate on a shooter/beat-'em-up that everyone loves? You get a tremendous editor squabble, with everyone fighting for the right to lavish praise on this '*GameFan* game' (i.e., until ECM drops the hammer and the monkeys stop chattering). At that point, it's normally "ECM's game" and everybody backs off. But this time, with such high stakes (a great Psikyo game) on the line, I had to do something different... drastic even. Grabbing a near-by light gun, I cried, "Step away from the *Cannon Spike*! ...or the Furby pillow gets it!" When I came to, ECM had written his half of the game and, seeing the extremes to which I would delve for my beloved Psikyo, he let me write the other half. So here it is—a two person review of *Cannon Spike*.







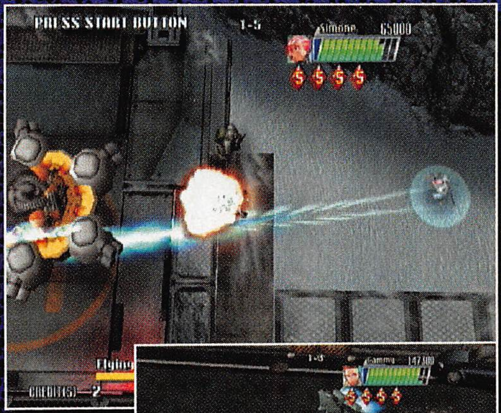
R REVIEW	Developer - Psikyo	1-2 Players	Viewpoint Score: 96
Eggo: What could be better than Rollerblades and G-strings? Rollerblades, guns, and G-strings!	Publisher - Capcom	Available Now	

Psikyo And Capcom—
A Match Made In Heaven

It's no secret that I love Psikyo as a developer of vertically scrolling shooters. *Strikers 1945 II* is my favorite game on Saturn (of course, you had to import it to know what I was talking about). That's right, not my favorite shooter on Saturn, favorite game... period. It's more fun to me than *Radiant Silvergun*, *Soukyugurentai*, or *Dodonpachi*. I spent more time playing it than *Virtua Fighter II*, *Virtual On*, or even the hallowed *Dragon Force*... and I nearly worshipped all those games. Yet when I had half an hour to kill and I wanted a pure gameplay experience, I'd pick up the analog controller and fly me a WWII plane for about two hours... and I hate WWII! There's so many things I love about Psikyo's vertical scrollers (horizontal is just not the same): the simplicity, the challenge, the sheer joy of dancing through a field of bullets as I thumb my nose at a boss... If you have no idea what I'm talking about, do yourself a favor and play *Strikers 1945 II* in either an arcade cabinet or an import Saturn... or if that's too much work, track down *Gunbird 2* on Dreamcast (it's more difficult, but plays very similar).

The other side of this dynamic duo is Capcom, the last bastion of hope for the defenders of 2D gaming (i.e., us). While every other company at E3 had booths overflowing with first person shooters, racing games, 3D platformers, and *Tomb Raider* clones, Capcom had none of that (well, *Spawn* is close to a FPS, but 1 out of 18 isn't bad). While polys ruled the day everywhere else on the show floor, Capcom sent out a worldwide distress signal to persecuted sprites everywhere. "Flock here and find sanctuary behind these solid walls of gaming!" That's right, I'm talking about you, *Strider 2*. You can scale these walls without worrying about collecting 100 fruit for an extra man or flipping a switch to open a door. *Gunbird 2* and *Mars Matrix*, you can spread your bullets here, and we won't slam you for harboring sprites. *Mega Man* and *Street Fighter*? You guys are big enough that you can have incarnations in 2D (*Mega Man X5* and *Marvel vs. Capcom 2*) and 3D (*Mega Man 64* and *Street Fighter EX3*). Needless to say Capcom proved that classic gaming isn't dead... it's just strung out on life support with an I.V. in its arm, but gosh darnit, this single company is doing its best to champion gameplay over graphics.



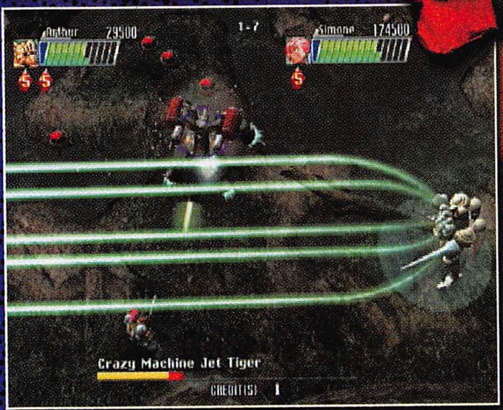


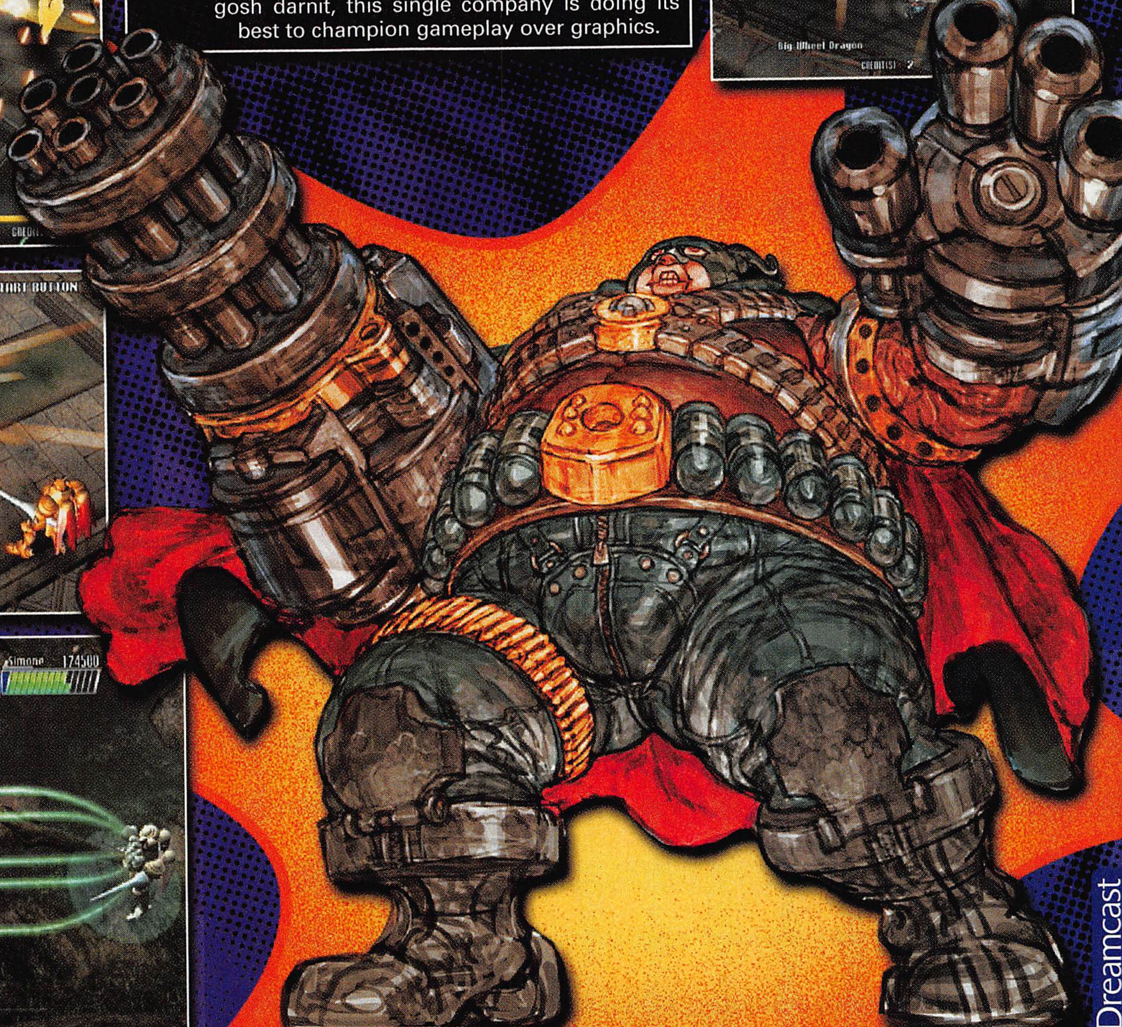




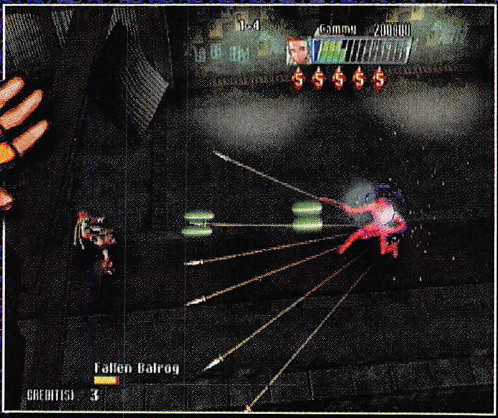




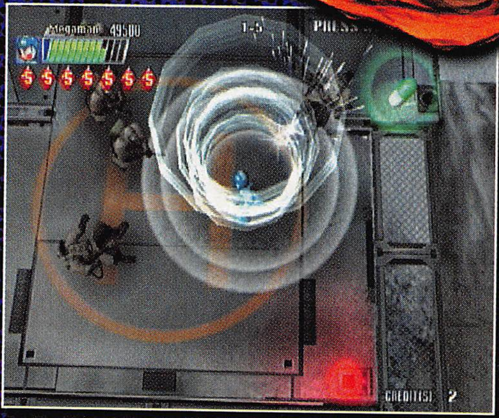












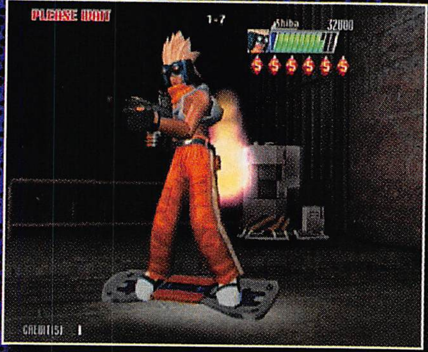




Now that you know my love for these two companies (Psikyo and Capcom), you can understand how thrilled I was to hear that they were working on this game called *Gun Spike* (as it's known in Japan). At E3, I was amazed to see the arcade cabinet for the very first time, but after playing it... I was completely disappointed. Sadly, the arcade version of *Cannon Spike* suffered from terrible control problems. To swing your gun around 180 degrees, you had to rotate your character the full 180 degrees... while dodging a storm of bullets. There was no instant turnaround. In a frenetically paced game like *Cannon Spike* (think a Psikyo shooter in closed quarters like *Smash TV*), this major hang-up was enough to ruin the experience entirely... rendering the game virtually unplayable. I ended up skipping *CS* in favor of *Mars Matrix* the rest of the time I spent at Capcom's booth...

Round 2... Fight!

When I caught wind of us having the reviewable Dreamcast version of this game in office, I felt the expectations and hope returning. Would Psikyo actually do the impossible and answer the frantic pleas of gamers to fix the control? I picked it up, played it and knew in seconds... it was good. Things were right in the world, as the Dreamcast version of *Cannon Spike* handles like a dream. Within minutes, Charlie was devastating baddies with his close-up flash kick, his standard issue pea shooter, or his jaw-dropping Sonic Boom super. No longer shackled by shoddy arcade controls, I was free to spin around at will, laying waste to baddies such as the *Resident Evil* dogs or a mutated version of Balrog (that's Vega to us). All comers fell to my close range combos and long distance missiles. Wading through the glorious 3D carnage, I was afforded time to admire the music and graphics thoroughly for the very first time. The music is phenomenal and this game is gorgeous! All the characters are incredibly well animated, and there's usually many enemies and explosions populating the screen at the same time. Bosses are appropriately screen-filling in size, and they send forth well-designed, intimidating sprays of bullets that my well-trained Psikyo-eye is accustomed to seeing and avoiding. Those bosses, just like the bullets, keep comin' and comin.'







Who's The Boss?

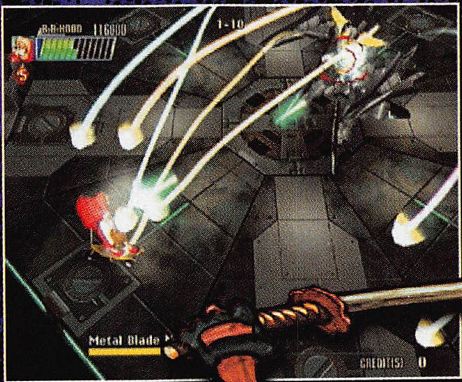
Not since the Treasure classics *Radiant Silvergun* and *Alien Soldier* have we seen boss-fests of epic proportions such as this. Every level has about three or so bosses, most of whom have partners in crime as well. Considering there's a total of 10 levels (a shockingly high total for a shooter), do the math and you'll see there's a lot of fighting to be had here. Assuming you play like a man (i.e., not using continues, which are but a crutch for the weak), *Cannon Spike* should hold your interest for a very long time.

Also, keep in mind that there are five main characters (Charlie and Cammy of *Street Fighter* fame, Arthur from *Ghosts 'N Goblins*, and original characters Shiba and Simone) along with two hidden ones (Mega Man from *Mega Man* and BB Hood from *Vampire Savior*) to choose from. While some would mock the Japanese convention of giving quirky names to their characters, I nearly shed a tear at seeing names like Insect Robo Overlord and Crazy Machine Jet Tiger in *Cannon Spike*. With old school gameplay comes old school names. It may not roll off the native tongue as well, but I'm perfectly fine with that.

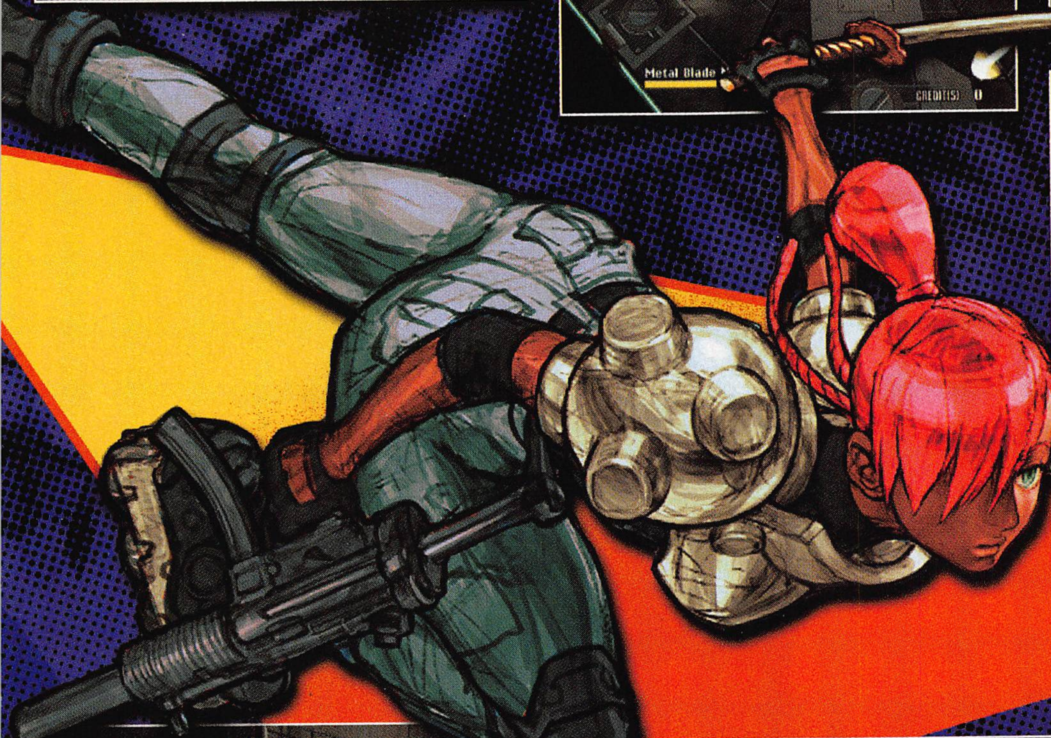


Coming Back For More

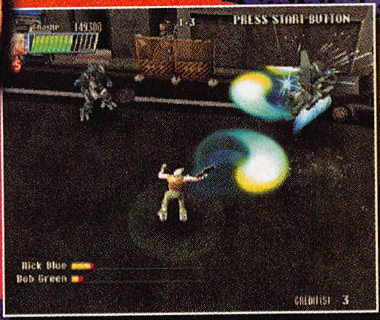
As I touched upon earlier, rock-solid gameplay is *Cannon Spike's* single greatest virtue. It's a shining example of what hard-core gamers like us should be asking for these days. This game's not about hidden stages, unlockable tracks, or frivolous extra













game modes. There's no ETA to finish the game in 40 hours, only to never touch it again. It strives to be like some of the classics—games which have yet to be one-upped despite constant attempts: *Street Fighter II: Turbo Hyperfighting*, *Streets of Rage 2*, or *Tetris Attack* (ECM's Note: *I was with you until Tetris Attack, <ugh>*). With its emphasis on gameplay, *Cannon Spike* reminds me of playing a new arcade game, circa 1985. I'd pop in a quarter and be treated to a novel, simple, enjoyable gaming experience... like playing *WWF Superstars*, *Shinobi*, *Twin Cobra*, *Ikari Warriors*, or *Rush 'N Attack*. *Cannon Spike* doesn't try to wow you with 60 FPS flesh-flaying speed, 2000+ polygonal characters, or eye-searing lighting effects. It's not a tech demo; it doesn't play DVD's; and it's not really multi-player (DOWN with the idea of 2 player shooters!). It's just a game... that's all. So if you consider yourself a gamer, then you know the cannon drill... go out and buy this game. Show some support for a company that still tries to make games for us, and not the fools who bought *Superman 64*.

Eggo hopes those rumors of another Capcom/Psikyo collaboration for 1944 are true.

Is It Over Yet?

Here I am again, folks; at the tail end of a **very** long issue (note to self: **never** take a vacation again), and as usual, I'm nearly delirious with lack of sleep. Right this moment, I'm the poster child for "don't operate heavy machinery" and all without the pleasant buzz that usually accompanies such warnings. Yep, I'm tired. But if there's one thing that can keep me going (other than a transfusion of Reubus' radioactive, Pepsi-and-nicotine-saturated blood) it's the sheer will power to let you, the reader, know about one of the best games released this year. Call me selfless, gallant, noble (or scared—what with Reubus waving a very heavy pipe wrench just off to one side), but you need to know about this game no matter the cost to me in lost sleep and lost sanity. A game that may even be Capcom's best of annum (even in a banner year with games like *Power Stone 2, MvC2, RE: Code Veronca, Strider 2* and **arcade** *Spawn* already available—with more to follow)—after all, I'm not gonna let Eggo have all the fun. So say hello, everybody, to Psikyo's *Cannon Spike*.



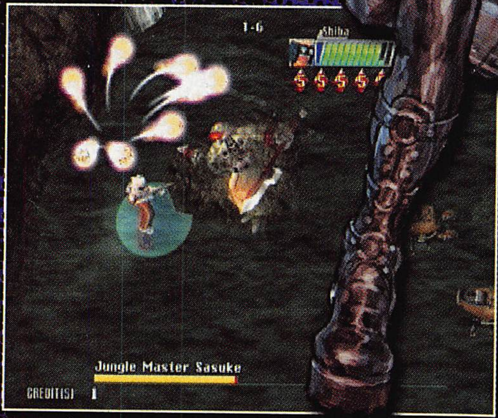


Oh that's right, this isn't entirely Capcom's baby. In fact, I'm not quite sure what percentage of this game is by the king of 3rd parties and which is by one of the best shooter developers on the planet—but what I do know is that this game is arcade action at its finest; a rare treat to be cherished by all and, more than likely, none.

Cannon Spike (a.k.a. *Gun Spike*) is the latest in a publishing deal between Capcom and Psikyo (the guys that brought you the wicked *Gunbird 2* earlier this year on import, and just about now domestically). We loved *GB2*, not least for the fact that it was a 2D, vertically scrolling shooter—heck, Eggo even believes that their earlier arcade/Saturn game *Strikers 1945 II* is the best Saturn game ever (note I said "believes"—the boy can be quite delusional at times). And if I was to give you one guess at what type of game *Cannon Spike* is, you'd probably jump up and down, pump your arm furiously and cry out "I know ECM... pick me, pick me!!!" And shortly after I smacked you for being an unruly monkey, you'd whimper "A shooter!"—and hey, you'd be... wrong? Well, sort of...











Cannon Spike Gets Loaded

See, CS isn't a shooter... not exactly anyway. Oh sure, you'll shoot things aplenty here: a vile legion of robots, cyborgs, mutants, alligators and everybody's favorite, zombies (straight out of *Resident Evil*)— but there's more to it than that. Instead of being forced in one direction as in most shooters (horizontally or vertically oriented), you'll play in a game more akin to Loaded than one of the *Strikers* games. Now, now just because you just saw the word 'Loaded' don't think it's anywhere near as monotonous as that 'classic' PlayStation game—far, far from it. However, before I delve too deeply into that let's take a quick peek at our first CS impressions ...

While Eggo has already mentioned it, let me go into slightly deeper detail. At E3, all was not a bed of roses for *Cannon Spike*; far from it, in fact. See, it had this nasty control issue that forced your character to rotate fully to accomplish even the most basic shot—think *Ikari Warriors* (or *Heavy Barrel*) **without** the rotating stick. This made turning and shooting a very frustrating experience as you'd ultimately wind up getting pinned down in a corner and shot in the back—over and over again. This was simply due to the fact that you couldn't turn fast enough, draw a bead, and unleash red hot death on the unsuspecting misanthropes littered throughout the screen. I played it once or twice, mumbled something about "annoying polygonal gameplay" and moved over to *Mars Matrix* (which lay a hand's breath away). After the show, while we were compiling our best of list, it became clear that I wasn't the only one that had issues with it. Turns out the entire staff was rather irritated as well. We'd remark how the game would have been so hot if only they'd rectify this one little glitch, this one little oversight... And guess what? They did.

REVIEW ECM: You say Seekyo, I say Cikyo. Viewpoint Score: 98



Night and Day

Now *Cannon Spike* is one of the best-playing efforts on Dreamcast. Instead of rotating on an axis you can instantly turn and shoot, returning fire to any cowardly foe that seeks to do the dishonorable thing and shoot you in the back. Thanks to the handy lock-on button you can also mercilessly gun-down any enemy that happens to get snared in your laser site, all the while deftly 'roller blading' (or hovering) your way through the thick of battle. At points, it elicits that heady Zen-like state many shooters and the über-game *Strider 2* engender. You'll step into battle, take in the lay of the land, size up an approaching army of interlopers and proceed to deal death with extreme prejudice. All the while you'll marvel at how tight and precise everything handles, and naturally wonder "Why doesn't everything play like this?" then you'll be off again, dodging bullets, screaming in raw, unfettered glee and thanking the powers that be that games like this still get made—I, personally, consider this some sort of miracle.

But you won't have too much time for idle thought, since *CS* requires one thing above all others: reflexes, reflexes, reflexes—it's an adrenaline junkie's wet dream. Deftly winging your way through any of the later levels will prove to be a task that will force the less skilled, less able (the Furys of the world) to reach deep down and tap an undiscovered, unexploited vein of gaming prowess. It's that or you'll be riding the continue button like a competing magazine editor playing Strider 2...oh wait, already flogged that horse in Ed Zone--sorry.

And as if the game on its own merits wasn't enough what makes it all the more satisfying, intoxicating even, is the inclusion of a veritable who's who of Capcom characters. Arthur, the stoic knight from the almost-forgotten *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* series; Cammy and Charlie of *Street Fighter* fame; and two newbies, Shiba and Simone. Oh, and how 'bout the two hidden characters? Oh yes, MegaMan and Baby Bonnie Hood (of *Darkstalkers* fame) are lurking somewhere in there begging to be unlocked, to heed the call to arms.

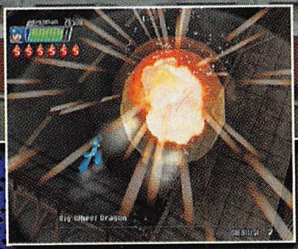


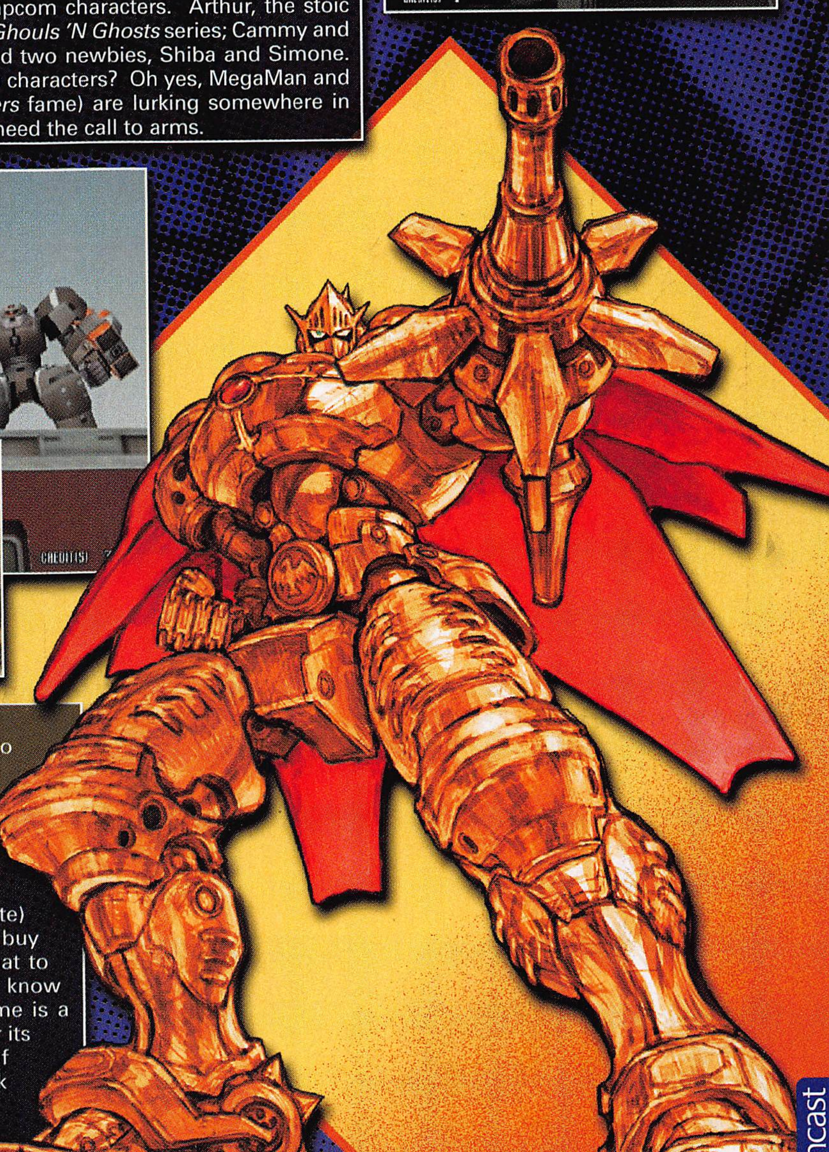








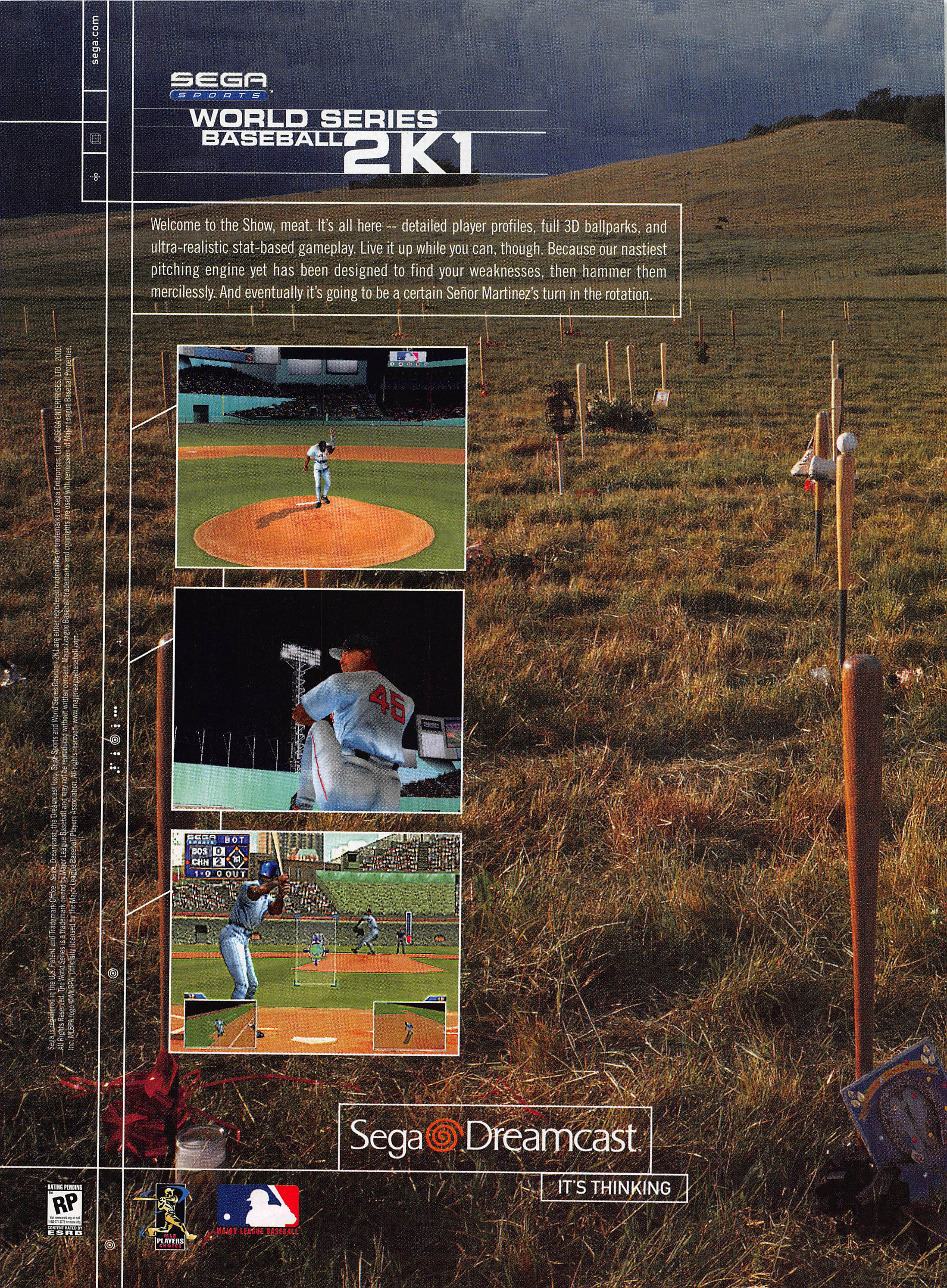




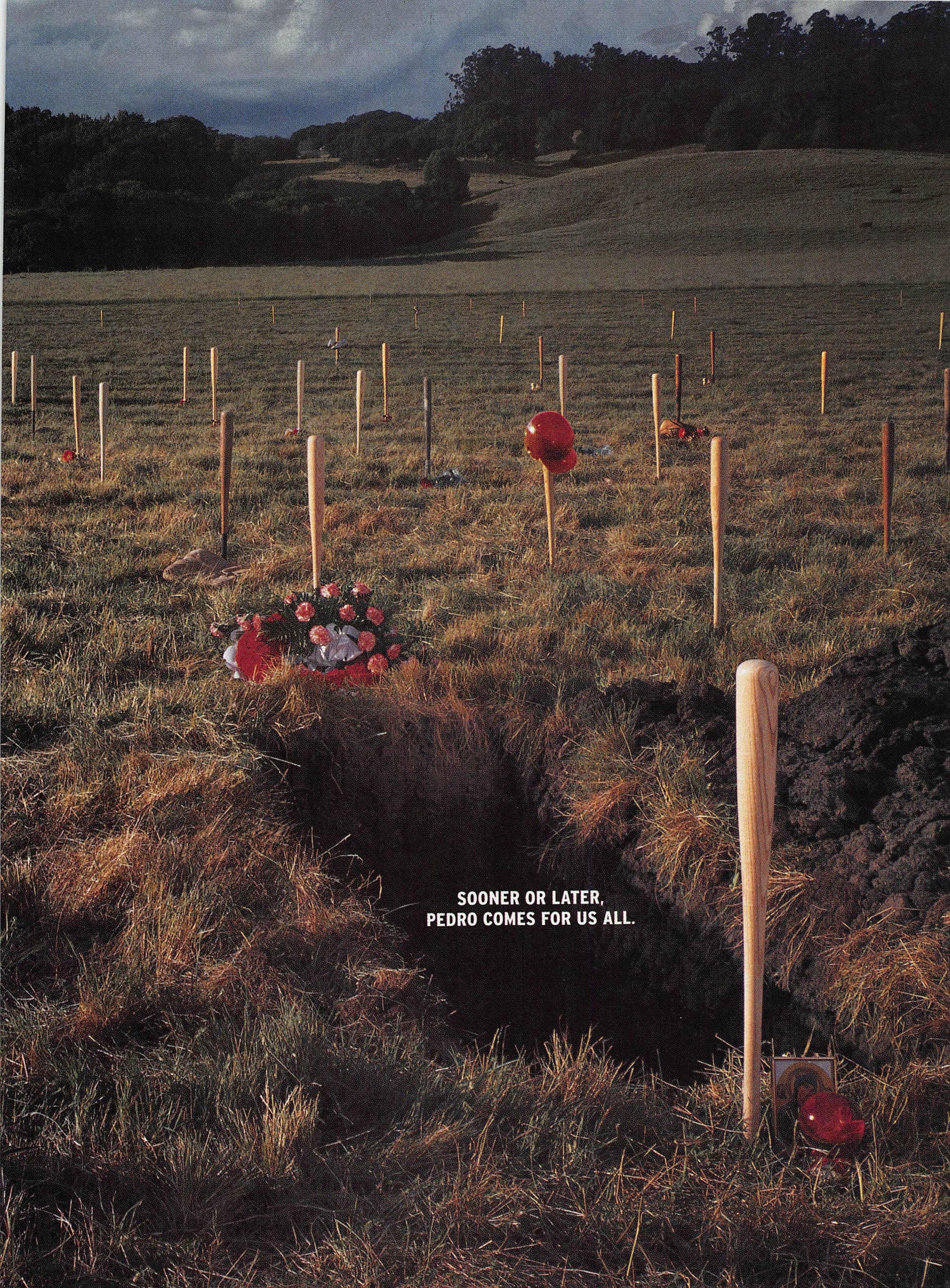
Capcom Rules

Yep, there really isn't a better way to put it. Sure, Psikyo is the company mostly behind it, but *Cannon Spike* probably wouldn't have even happened without the support of the one company in all of gamedom that truly loves you. Capcom makes games for one person: the gamer, and nobody else. Coupling with companies like Raizing (for the CPS2-powered *Dimahoo*) and up-and-comer Psikyo for CS (and the soon-to-come *1944* update) proves that beyond a shadow of a doubt. And if you buy games to play 'video games' (and if I need to explain that to you, well...) this is where your money should be going. I know I've said it about a lot of Capcom products, but this game is a must buy title. While I fought with the rest of the staff over its viability as a system-seller, I'm gonna have to say that if you don't already own a DC here's another reason to fork over the cash—now maybe if Capcom brought these types of games to PS2, Sony would have something to crow about...

ECM's ended his anger strike: He'd sworn off being grumpy until a decent shooter made its way to the DC.



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Welcome to the Show, meat. It's all here -- detailed player profiles, full 3D ballparks, and ultra-realistic stat-based gameplay. Live it up while you can, though. Because our nastiest pitching engine yet has been designed to find your weaknesses, then hammer them mercilessly. And eventually it's going to be a certain Señor Martinez's turn in the rotation.
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Sega Dreamcast
IT'S THINKING
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MLB PLAYERS CHOICE
MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL


SOONER OR LATER,
PEDRO COMES FOR US ALL.


PlayStation
Danger Never Looked So Good!
COLLECTORS ITEM!
Manual features exclusive character sketches, bios and artwork from the creators!
3rd person action-adventure has never been sexier with DANGER GIRL, the only videogame based on the best-selling comic book series by J. Scott Campbell and Andy Hartnell.
Dare to take control of 3 beautiful yet lethal Danger Girls in an espionage-themed thrill-ride deemed too dangerous for any man to handle!
Varied modes of play: stealth, sniper and more
Dozens of weapons (whips–need we say more?)
Original art by the creators
Classic Danger Girl signature moves
FINDERS KEEPERS
TEEN
Animated Violence
Animated Blood
Suggestive Themes
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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GameFan Interviews Justin Halliday Producer—Test Drive Le Mans



GameFan: How long have you guys been developing *Test Drive Le Mans*?
Justin Halliday: We started working on the game in June of 1999—about the time of the Le Mans race that year. However, we spent the first three months in pre-production, and the game finally got going in September. So far, we've been working properly on the game for about ten months. We're currently about three to four months away from completion, so the total development time will be just over a year.

GF: Before you guys got involved, was there any talk about simply porting the PlayStation code?
JH: That was the original plan with *Test Drive Le Mans*. However, a number of factors caused us to abandon that idea and re-build the game for the Dreamcast. I think that doing a port would have been a waste of the talents of the team. You can see from the quality that it would have been a shame to put these guys to work on a port. It'd be like asking Picasso to paint your house (although he'd probably do an interesting job...).

GF: How do you guys feel about companies doing just basic system-to-system ports?
JH: I have no problem with ports, what I have a problem with is sub-standard ports. It's not good enough to just throw a game across to another platform and unleash it on an unsuspecting public. Each system has different strengths and weaknesses that must be taken into account. You can see this in a lot of the Dreamcast ports that are around at the moment. When properly programmed, the Dreamcast is very powerful, but when it's poorly programmed, it's a dog's breakfast.

GF: In light of Seganet's launch, how important do you think online play is to a racer and were you guys ever toying with the idea of making *Test Drive Le Mans* networkable?
JH: Seganet was still a gleam in Sega's eye when we started on *Test Drive Le Mans*. I think that online play is important, but it's less important than single-machine multiplayer, which is less important than a good strong single player game. I think that you can have more fun in *Test Drive Le Mans* playing with four friends crowded onto a couch than you can playing against someone you don't know in another city. If *Test Drive Le Mans* was to support online play then we would have had to design the underlying systems to take this into account from the start. Unfortunately, we didn't plan this into the project at the start, so it isn't possible for us to include it now. Our future games will all have online functionality.

GF: Prior to this, what games have you guys been involved with?
JH: We're currently also working on *Looney Tunes Space Race*. In the past, Melbourne House has done these games (amongst others):

GP500 (PC)
KKND Krossfire (PC)
Dethkarz (PC)
KKND (PC)
True Lies (SNES)
Shadowrun (SNES)
Nightshade (NES)
Star Wars (NES)
Hunt for the Red October (Game Boy)
Usagi Yojimbo (C64)
Fist II (C64)
Way of the Exploding Fist (C64)
The Hobbit (C64)

GF: What would you say separates *Test Drive Le Mans* from the rest of the DC racing pack?
JH: So far there hasn't been a driving game that really takes advantage of the Dreamcast's unique strengths. One of the things that we've tried to do with *Test Drive Le Mans* is to really push the system to its limits. I don't know of any racing games on the Dreamcast that have over twenty unique cars, all racing around circuits as detailed as ours.

The other difference is that *Test Drive Le Mans* really captures the feeling of real racing. Real racing isn't about putting six cars on a track—real racing is about jamming as many cars onto the track as you can. Real racing is rough and fast and loud and brash, that's what *Test Drive Le Mans* is about.

GF: Which do you feel is better to spend more time on, the track-side detail or the car models?
JH: You can't have one at the expense of the other. What we've done with *Test Drive Le Mans* is balance the amount of detail in the tracks with the amount of detail in the cars. Our aim has been to fill the entire screen with detail, not to just cram it all into the cars at the expense of the tracks. *Gran Turismo 2000* is a great example of this. The cars in the game look amazing, but the tracks seem to have come straight from the PlayStation game.

Our original budget for cars and tracks was about 50/50. However, now that we've got all the cars onto the track, it's moving towards 60/40 in favor of the cars.

GF: Speaking of the car models, how many polys did you wind up utilizing per car?
JH: We currently have close to 3000 polys in each car. We're currently investigating a couple of areas that may push that number out by another 500 polys. In comparison, the original PC game used about 800 polygons per car. In the future, we'll be increasing these numbers to about 5000.

After that, you reach two brick walls. Firstly, the point of diminishing returns. There are only a finite number of pixels that any of the next generation consoles can put onto the screen. You can put more polys into the models, but the player won't notice any difference after a certain point. Secondly, you reach the point where you can't physically store all of the car models into the console's memory—so you can have more detailed cars, but less of them.

GF: One thing most DC games (especially racers) get a lot of flak for is inconsistent frame rates. How have you attempted to rectify that issue?
JH: From the start, we've been pushing for 60 frames per second. We've coded all of our systems with this aim and we've had the game running at 60 most of the time. However, we've recently made the decision to drop to a rock solid 30 frames. This decision was made for a bunch of reasons—time, playability (when a game drops frames at 60 it's more noticeable than dropping frames at 30) and graphical quality. If we had pursued 60 frames more, then the quality of the backdrops or the cars would have had to suffer. Because we optimized our systems so much, we can now display more cars and scenery at a more solid framerate than before.

GF: The control in *Le Mans* seems to be very reminiscent of your typical F1 game in the sense that it's extremely easy to spin out and loose control. Do you feel this "learning curve" will sway your average racing fan from playing the game and can you guys institute anything to make it easier for novices... like Fury?
JH: The unique difficulty faced in *Le Mans* is that every car in the game can travel at more than 200 miles per hour. When you compare this with other games, it's really a huge leap and it's a big ask for a player to slip right into a car that fast and drive it for the first time. We're currently working on improving the accessibility of the game with a bunch of driving aids and information. These things include Auto Braking, ABS, Traction Control and Braking Information.

GF: Were there any particular cars that you guys weren't able to put in the game?
JH: We would have loved to include more of the classic Le Mans cars like the GT40 into the game, but time pressures got the better of us in the end. Other than that, we're really happy with the mix of cars in the game. The good thing is that we have the best cars from '99, '98 and '97. In *Test Drive Le Mans*, you get to pit the Toyota GT1 against the McLaren and the Mercedes CLK-LM. If we were stuck with a single year, then the selection of cars would have been far narrower.

GF: If you guys could team up with any video game development staff to make the "ultimate" racer who would they be?
JH: They'd have to be the guys from Sega. Yu Suzuki and his team know their stuff. In fact, if you look at video-game history, Yu Suzuki has been pivotal in the development of many of the best racing games (*Outrun*, *Daytona* and *Ferrari 355*). It's amazing that you can still go into arcades and see 8 *Daytona* machines lined up against a wall being played.

GF: How do you feel the DC will fare against the upcoming PlayStation 2?
JH: This is a tough question. Firstly, it's obvious that the DC has got the best games on it at the moment. Secondly, it's obvious that the DC is struggling in Japan since the PS2's launch. I guess the answer to this question revolves around how well Sony does this Christmas, and whether Sega can get the price of the DC down. Will that be enough? I don't know. I think that Sony's biggest problem is that a lot of people may hold off on the PS2 and wait for the Xbox and Star Cube.

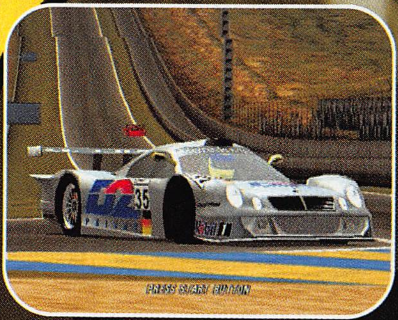
GF: Has any of your staff actually attempted to play the game for 24 hours straight?
JH: Not yet, but we've been preparing ourselves mentally for months!

GF: Any chance of a DC sequel to *Way of the Exploding Fist*?
JH: I'm trying to talk the powers-that-be into it—but it would have to be special to do justice to the name.

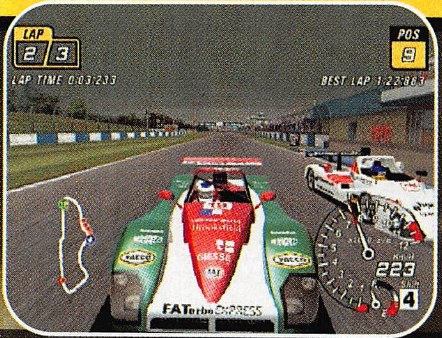
GF: Thank you for your time and we hope your game sells like hotcakes!
JH: It's been a pleasure.

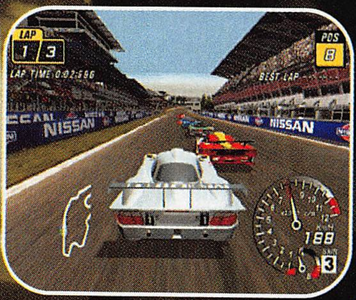
TEST DRIVE LE MANS







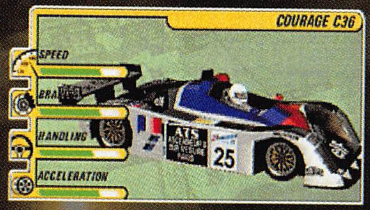






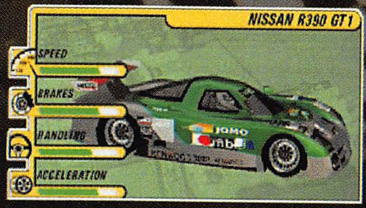
When the import version of *Sega Rally 2* first arrived on scene, I knew immediately that the Dreamcast would become a racing enthusiast's ideal console. Back then it was just a hunch, but taking into account how closely *Rally* mimicked its arcade counterpart, I felt pretty comfortable making such a bold statement. Besides, if I ever needed any additional proof, the last three months overseas have seen enough grade "A" racers released (including *Ferrari F355* and *Shutokou Battle 2*) to satisfy any hardcore speed demon. And let's not forget the tuning freaks... there is a little game called *Sega GT* heading down the American pipeline. Yes sir, the DC has certainly found its calling on four rubber-scorched tires and this year's E3 again proved Sega's commitment to racing. But believe it or not, not all of the quality racers at the convention center were from Crave or one of Sega's famed in-house development teams. Indeed, if you searched hard enough, and had the discipline not to just spend the entire show drooling over the *Metal Gear Solid 2* trailer, you might have come across Infogrames' latest *Test Drive* game. Who would have ever thought there was life beyond AM2?

Based on the world famous racing event in France, the 24 Heures du Mans, Infogrames (in association with Australian developer Melbourne House) have, surprisingly, produced one of the sleekest looking racers we've seen in recent memory. Hey, it was enough to pull us away from games like *Metropolis Street Racer* and *Gran Turismo 2000*. But if you're sitting back, thinking to yourself "Just why are these guys so excited about a mere port of a PlayStation game?" then here's a bit of interesting news: The good folks at Melbourne House weren't satisfied simply porting code from the recently released PS Le Mans racer to Dreamcast. Oh no. Sega-heads are in for a big treat when this puppy hits shelves later this year. EVERYTHING about the DC build was specifically designed around the Power VR Chipset. And while the game is still early in development, I'm already confident that gamers will more than pleased with Melbourne House's first DC offering.



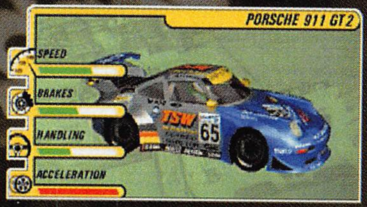
Prototype

These normally open cockpit cars run 600hp turbo or naturally aspirated engines that can range up to 8000cc. Prototype class cars are not based on any production model, being built purely for the track. The Prototype cars are among the fastest at the 24 Le Mans, especially due to low curb weight.



GT1

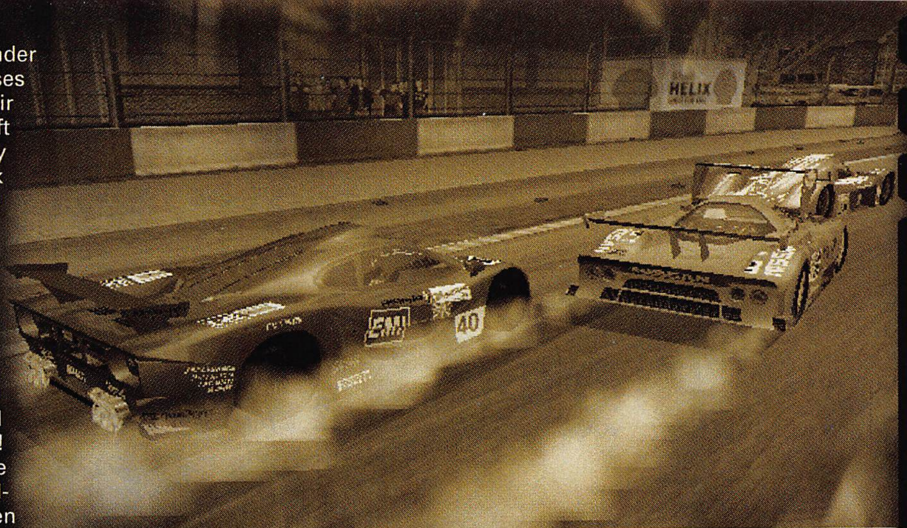
GT1 cars are modified factory models that must be produced at least 50 at a time. Two such cars are the Porsche 911 GT1 and Nissan R390 GT1. Both of these exotic racers command a steep price tag of at least one million dollars! The GT1 class cars are often just as fast as the Prototype cars so they're a blast to watch!



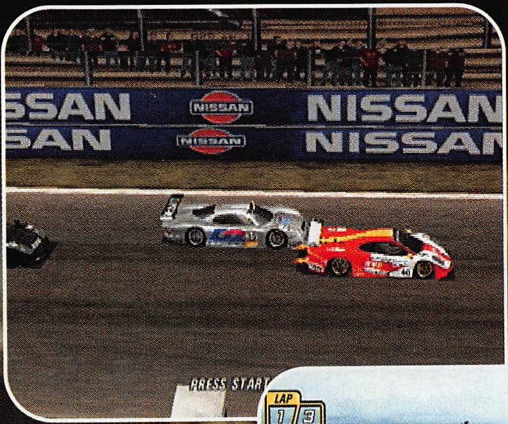
GT2

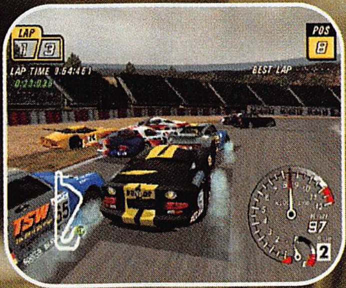
The final class is the GT2 category. These are modified factory cars which are not as powerful as the GT1 or Prototype class. In Europe, street legal GT2 cars can be purchased at the local auto dealership. One such car is the Porsche 911 GT2 that has a naturally aspirated engine based on the same engine found in the million dollar Porsche 911 GT1!

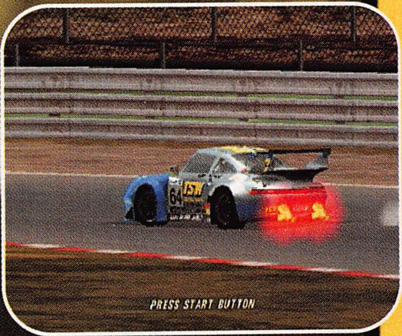
EXCLUSIVE		
Fury: From Woodland Hills, CA, to Le Mans, France—not bad for a kid from L.A...	Developer - Melbourne House Publisher - Infogrames	1-4 Players Available Now

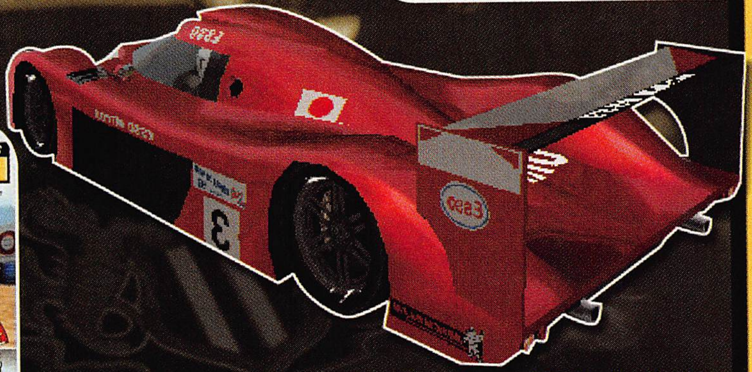


Now, many companies have come under the gun recently for making brash promises about improved polygon counts in their titles. Often times, to our dismay, we're left with maybe a third of what was originally touted and forced to delve into deep, dark rants as an outlet for our disappointment (as though we really enjoy stickin' it to certain developers in the first place... hmm, there was that whole Titus *Superman* issue... ok, I take that back). But you'll find no angry rants here, for the talented lot involved have opted to let the game's graphics speak for themselves. Believe me, if you want a DC game that takes full advantage of the system's raw power, you'll find no better candidate than *TD Le Mans*! While I'm not going to take a stab at the number of polygons used on the car models, let's just say it's somewhere between one and three million (hope that helps!). Seriously though, once you see this game in motion, you'll marvel at the freakish amount of the



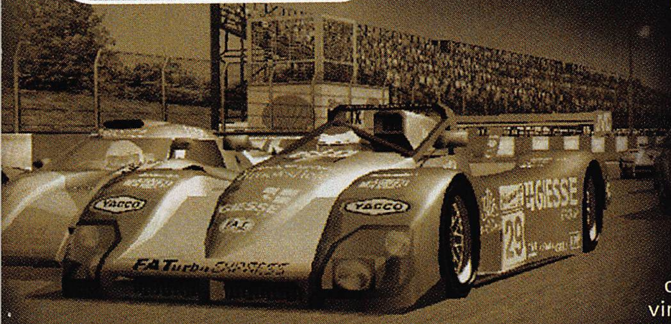












detail in cars like the Porsche 911 GT2 or Viper GTS R. In all, the game will eventually sport forty official Le Mans vehicles and that includes both the GT (GT1 and GT2) and prototype classes. Of course, if you're not familiar with the various car divisions that compete in Le Mans, you can simply check the box out on the bottom of this article for a quick look at what's needed to stay competitive... and we're talking more than just coffee and Red Bull (sorry, Kodomo)!

But what good would all that painstaking time spent on the vehicles be without awesome courses to tear up? Fortunately, racers aren't just limited to the famous Le Mans track in France. Ten real life locations will be available in the final and that includes a number of DC exclusives such as Suzuka National, Donington Grand Prix, Catalunya National and Brno among others. But the realism won't just extend to the tracks. Awesome vehicle effects like sparks, backfires, smoke, sun glares, car lights and real time shadows will only add to the polished feel of the car physics. However, if you overlook necessary pit stops and neglect keeping a steady eye on your fuel consumption, tire wear and gas level, you might not even be a contender in the first place.

I'll tell you, I myself was hesitant to step behind the controls of *Test Drive Le Mans* and for one good reason... *Test Drive 6*. Come on, let's be honest here. That game was poor and it did little to convince DC owners of the reliability of the *Test Drive* license. Luckily in this case, with Melbourne House at the helm *TD Le Mans* appears more like a far removed cousin of the franchise than anything else. So put to rest any fears about god-awful frame rates or broken car models because this game will surely wind up part of the DC's racing elite. **F**


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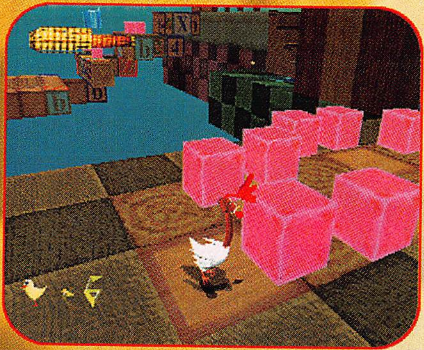






On Playing Fair

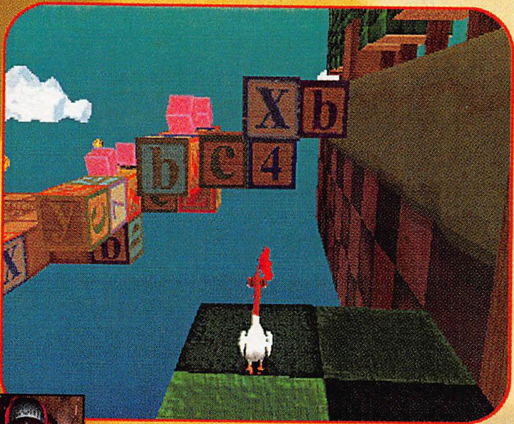
Nothing galls me more than so-called pro magazines (web and print) that bash a game that's nary 15% complete. Case in point: A fellow print pub that shall remain happily nameless (though I hear it's the choice of the next generation...oops), recently 'awarded' And Now's latest 3D platformer *Mort the Chicken* with worst game of E3 'honors.' Now it may just be me, but the last time it was OK to rail a game based on a barely alpha build was, lemme see... oh that's right, **NEVER**. There's a cardinal rule (or there should be) that states that no one should be able to gut anything short of a final, shipped product—at that point, if it's still really mangled, you can break out the ball peen hammer, steel tongs, and can of Crisco for all I care.



But looking for sport to name to a 'worst of E3' list is inane what with legion upon legion of unfinished, incomplete and barely playable games littering the show floor. Then again, I guess it's easier to pick on the little guys... after all, they're not gonna affect your ability to get ads, right? This from the same magazine that proclaimed *Metal Gear Solid 2* "Game of the Show" when it was nothing more than a demo reel that even Hideo Kojima admits isn't representative of what we can expect of the finished product—that's what I call class. And before you even think it, we don't enjoy (as Fury puts it) playing 'Big Brother' to the rest of our brethren, but good God, I swear that sometimes they need to be chided like a five year old spoiled brat... I truly weep for their readers.

Chicken Power

Now that I've gotten that bit of unpleasantness behind me, you've probably gathered that I like *Mort the Chicken* even in its presently sub-alpha state. And you'd be right! After all, how does smooth, 30 fps gaming (remember, this is PS) with a frightfully well-animated chicken clucking and pecking his way through level after elegantly designed level sound?

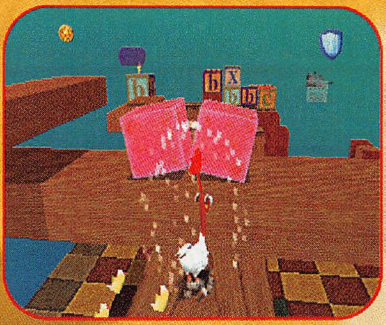


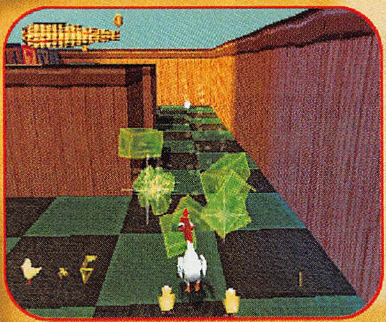
And admittedly it does seem a mite odd. Not only odd but downright off-the-wall. However, even if the theme seems a little off-the-beaten-path, it's actually a re-birth of *Jumping Flash*—*Jumping Flash* meets *Flicky*, that is. That's right, Sony's formerly numero uno robotic rabbit mascot has been reincarnated as a chicken—which is a **very** good thing if you happened to play the nearly insufferable *Robbit Mon Dieu*.

Chickens *Can* Fly!

Since Mort is essentially *Flicky* meets *Jumping Flash*, maybe I oughtta give you a brief history lesson on exactly what *Flicky* was (or is, I suppose). Back in the early '80s Sega published a cute little arcade title by the name of *Flicky*. You took control of a little bird that had to rescue all of its chicks to escape to the next of many, many levels, all the while avoiding the evil machinations of a feral feline. Obviously the game was entirely 2D and featured ultra-simplistic graphics but for some reason it had that magical addiction factor that so many games these days have trouble replicating—though I suppose if I pulled *Flicky* out now I may have some difficulty re-living that vivid addiction without a controlled substance.

E EXCLUSIVE	ECM: What are ya? Chicken?	Developer - And Now	1 Player
		Publisher - Crave	Available 4th Qtr





Barnyard Battle

MTC generally takes place amongst several floating islands (a la *Jumping Flash*) where Mort has to navigate around the levels with his jumping ability. Unlike Robbit, though, he doesn't have a triple jump so he must rely on other means of reaching the far and away nooks and crannies (hmmm...) scattered throughout each level. Chicks are generally placed in rather precarious perches (presumable to take advantage of their in-born inability to fly) and Mort must utilize his brain, and numerous pick-ups scattered throughout the playfield to pick (peck?) his way across the levels.

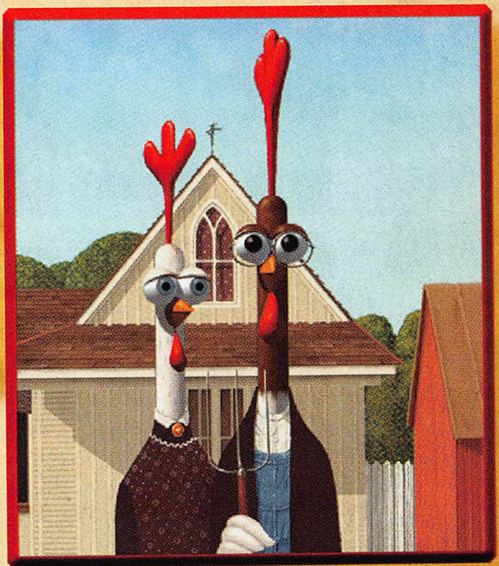
Along the way, naturally, the insidious Boolean will attempt to do Mort in. And while Mort's going around gathering up the various and sundry chicks he also has to contend with the '*Flicky* factor': If Mort is struck while leading a train of chicks to the 'escape hatch' (which oddly enough resembles a well) he'll lose one chick and must make a mad dash to collect it again before it returns to its original location. While the early levels are a cake walk, it gets increasingly rough as time goes on—not unusual, but if you've ever played a game by Ed Anunziata before (I tell you the man is a masochist) you'll know how that speaks volumes.

Heeeeeeeeere's Mort!

Not only is the gameplay incredibly sound at this point in time, but it's also strung together with some of the funniest cut scenes ever. Games like *Skull Monkeys* and *Tiny Tank* (also by And Now) got the ball really rolling on the 'so funny it hurts cut scenes,' but *Mort* takes it a notch higher... something about employing a full-time comedy writer may have a bit to do with that. I won't ruin the jokes for you here, but just know that it's a nice bonus to what's shaping up to be a very solid game.







Is It Live, or Is It Memorex?

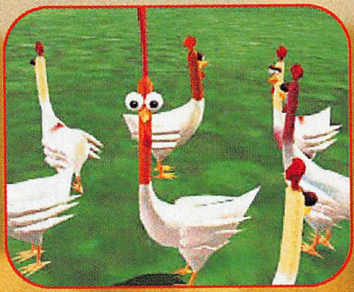
What's really freaky about Mort, though, is simply the way he behaves. Oh, that's right, Mort doesn't just animate, cycling through a series of 3D animations—oh no, he's actually a living, breathing creature. A lot of ruckus has been made of late in the area of behavior and creation of synthetic 'actors'—Jar Jar of "Episode 1" infamy is the perfect example. Well, Mort is the world's first synthetic chicken.

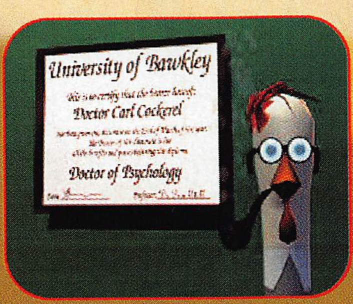
And Now has gone through great pains to make Mort behave like the flightless fowl upon which he is patterned after. And the freaky thing is, he does act like a real chicken. Sure, it sounds simplistic and silly, but if you actually stop and look at him cavorting around the screen or in numerous idle animations, the work that's been put into him is truly staggering. I bet if you lopped his head off with a sharp hatchet he'd run around like, uh, a chicken with his head cut off. Screen shots really can't do him justice—you'll just have to check it out yourself.

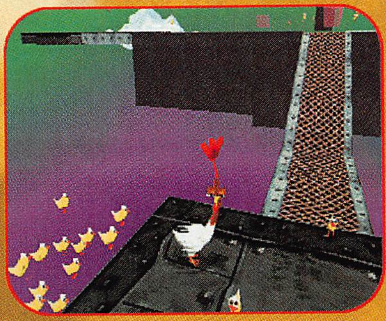


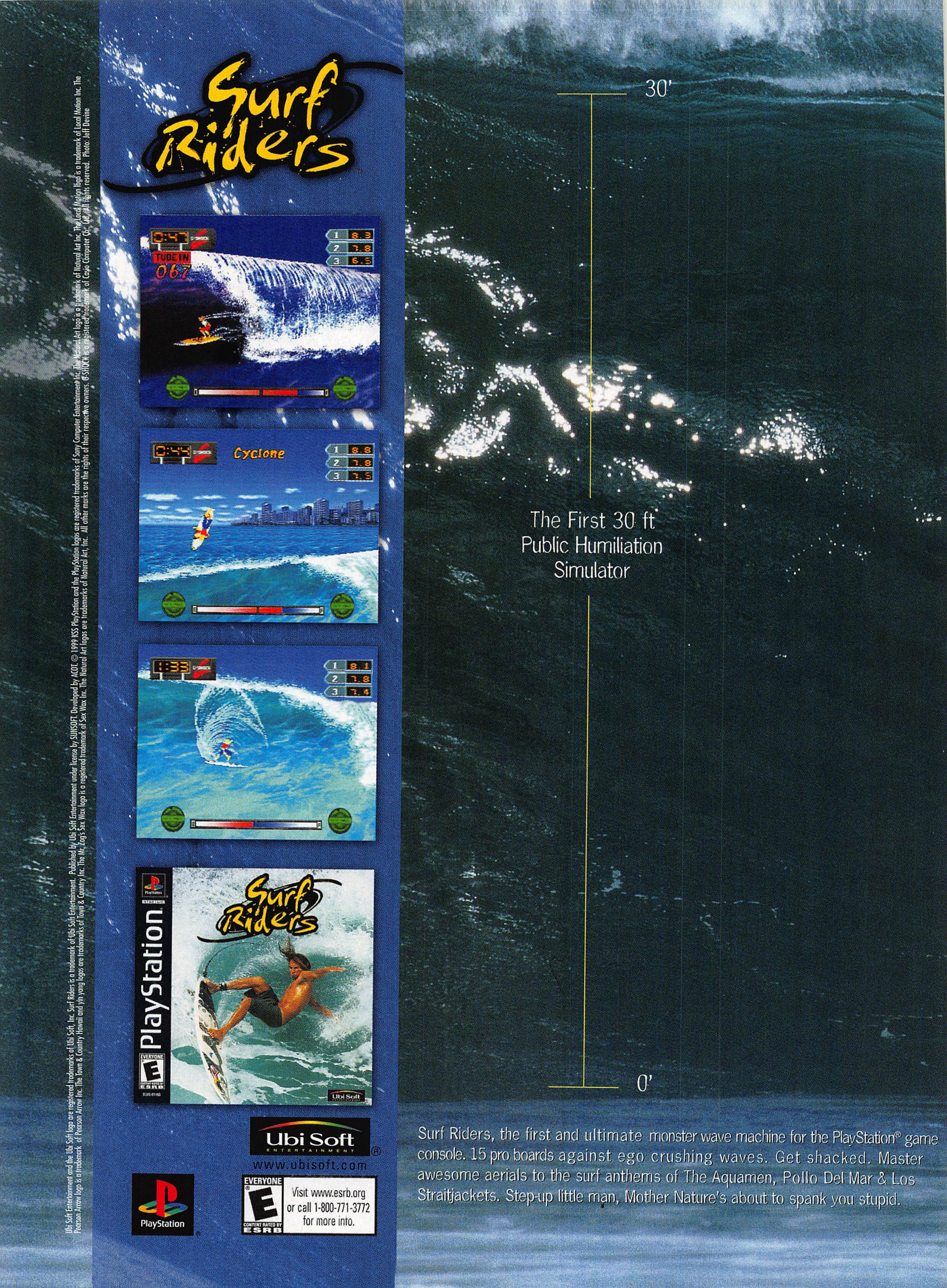
What Did Mom Say About Books...

So the moral of this story is: Don't judge a book by its cover. While Mort still has a number of months to go before things are review-ready and shipshape, I think it's safe to say that And Now and Crave (the publisher) could have a nice fat sleeper hit on their hands (and in today's cutthroat PS market, that's a good thing). Now, if only *Metal Gear Solid 2* had an accurately modeled chicken on board—then *maybe* we would have made it Game of the Show. **ECM**








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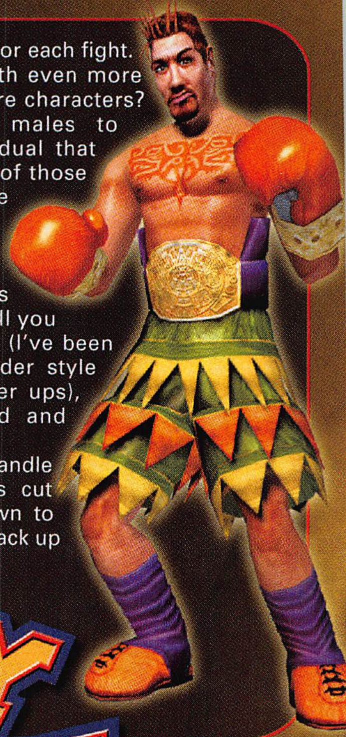
Prelude to War

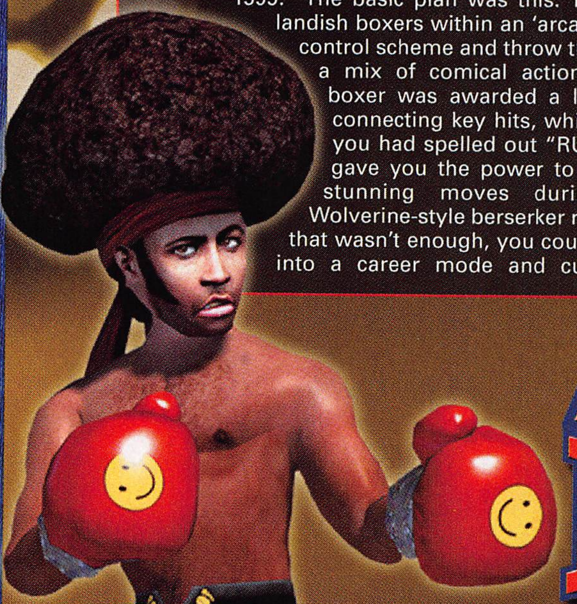
Okay, let's cut the preamble. Right now, Sega and Sony are competing for your hard earned dollars, each looking to capture the lucrative 128-bit console market. Sega's already has impressive sales and a lengthy head start, now fueled by the unlikely marriage of console gaming and network play. Sony, fresh from big numbers in Japan (hardware, that is) and the success of the original PlayStation, is looking to become the first console maker to seamlessly dominate two generations back-to-back.

Enter *Ready to Rumble Round 2*, which has the distinction of being one of the first games in development for both the American Dreamcast and PlayStation 2. If you're unfamiliar with the first *R2R*, you missed out on the premier pugilist punch-fest of 1999. The basic plan was this: Take outlandish boxers within an 'arcade-style' control scheme and throw them into a mix of comical action. Each boxer was awarded a letter for connecting key hits, which, after you had spelled out "RUMBLE," gave you the power to unleash stunning moves during a Wolverine-style berserker rage. If that wasn't enough, you could enter into a career mode and customize your boxer's training and stats for each fight.

Now, the game returns with even more action. You say you want more characters? Running the gamut from males to females (and a certain individual that seems to 'Pop' between both of those classifications...) with a wide variety of fighting styles, the number of characters has been bumped up quite a bit and now sports a few famous faces. Unfortunately, I can't tell you exactly who makes up the list (I've been threatened with a Afro Thunder style beating at the hands of higher ups), but you'll be both surprised and pleased with the final roster.

So how does each console handle the game so far? Well, let's cut through the hype and get down to brass tacks. Here is how they stack up in the tale of the tape.





READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING™ ROUND 2



The Wiley Veteran:

In this corner, weighing in at a spry 4.4 pounds, the current 128-bit champ, Sega's Dreamcast. A lot has been made of (and, more accurately, heaped on) the DC. With fan boys chomping at the bit to dispute polygon numbers (spouting the phrase "DC can't do X or Y" like a remorseless pusher in the park), it hasn't been an easy road to travel. However, a generous amount of quality software has not been the issue (okay, forget about RPG's for a minute), and the machine has sold millions of units in the US alone.

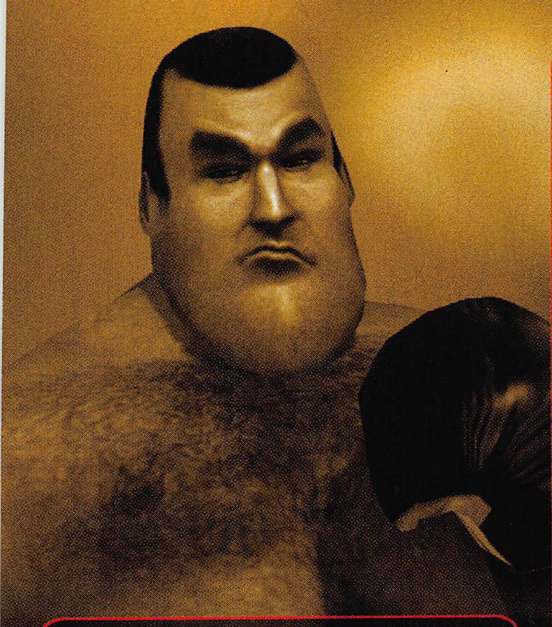
The obvious benefit the DC has is familiarity; already hosting the first *R2R* last year will have given programmers a step up on the purported 'unfriendly' PS2 hardware. Graphically, the DC rev is at the very minimum on par with the PS2, and actually features much better image quality. The trade off comes in the frame rate department, yielding a visually cleaner, but slower match.















The New Kid:

Over here, tipping the scales at a stout 5.29 pounds, Sony's PS2 lies in wait, hoping to quash nay-sayers everywhere with it's intimidating car amplifier looks and impressive number-crunching prowess and armed with the deadly 'floating point hook.'

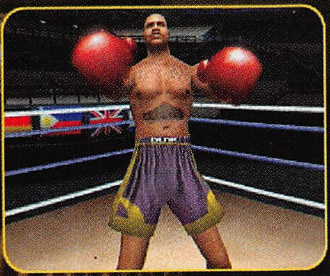
At this time, Midway looks to have spent more time on the current PS2 version, evident from the small crowd watching the match (which is noticeably absent from the DC rev). The main talking point is a 'blurring effect', which is used nicely when you get knocked down, but tends to make the graphics lack sharpness. Things are still clear, but, much like the final boss in the PS2 DOA2, the overused blurring tends to beg the question "Why?" However, the raw polygon pushing power of the PS2 allows for a consistently high frame rate, which doesn't slow down or bog at any time. It looks smoother than the DC, but not necessarily better...



DREAMCAST

PLAYSTATION 2

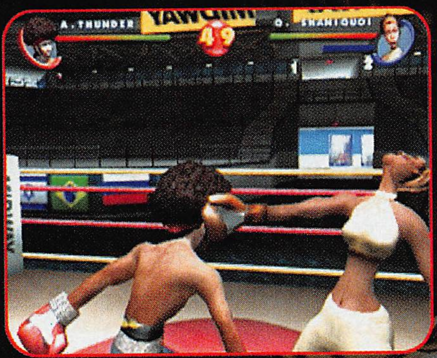


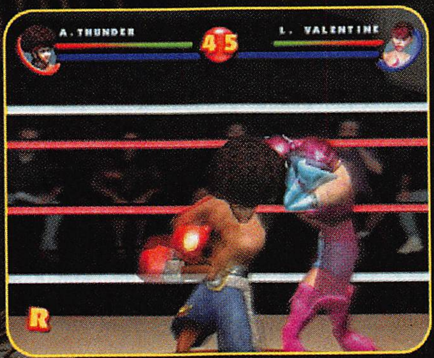




Unanimous Decision: Draw!

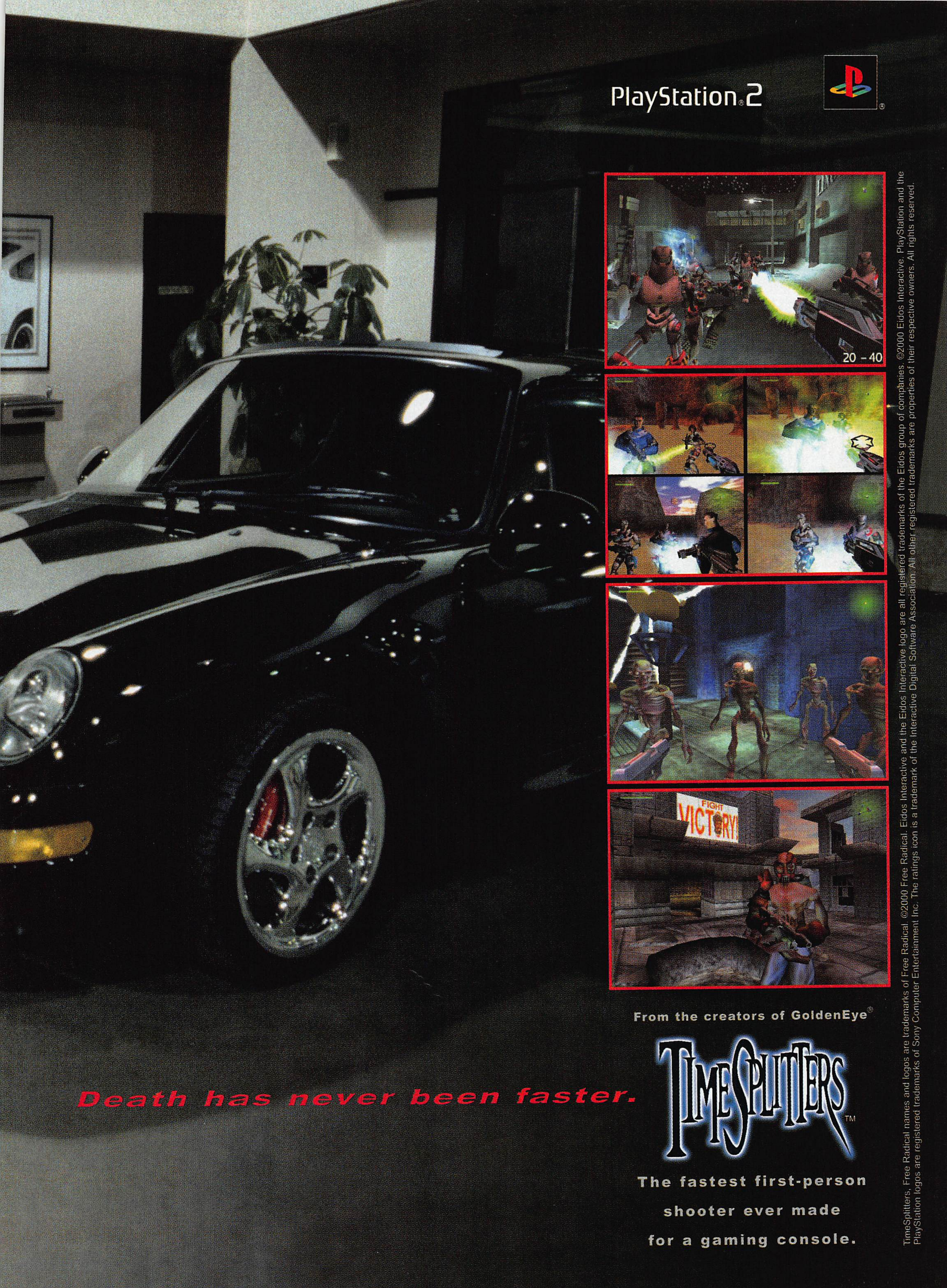
Finally, a disclaimer: Both games are currently in the pre-alpha phase of development, which, if you're not up to speed on industry lingo, means 'very, very early.' This is generally the time when companies have the first playable versions of the games, with many features not implemented and/or running pre-debug (which explains exactly why I actually got to fight Michael Buffer a few times...). New characters models are actually in the game, but can't be played as of yet (limiting the current playable number to around 8 for both versions). As it stands right now, each system is building towards its respective strong point (be it raw polygon power or clean graphics), but you can expect a better comparison when both games are closer to final form. That's when the *real* rumble begins. **Kodomo**



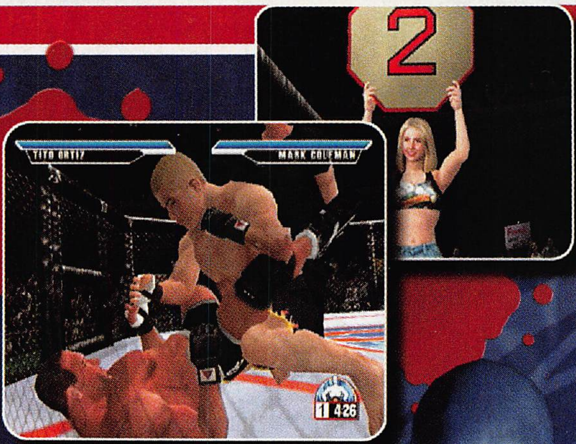





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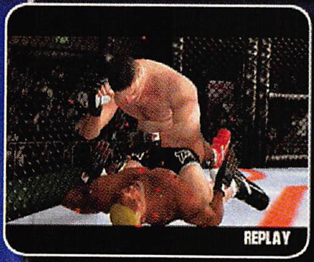
UFC

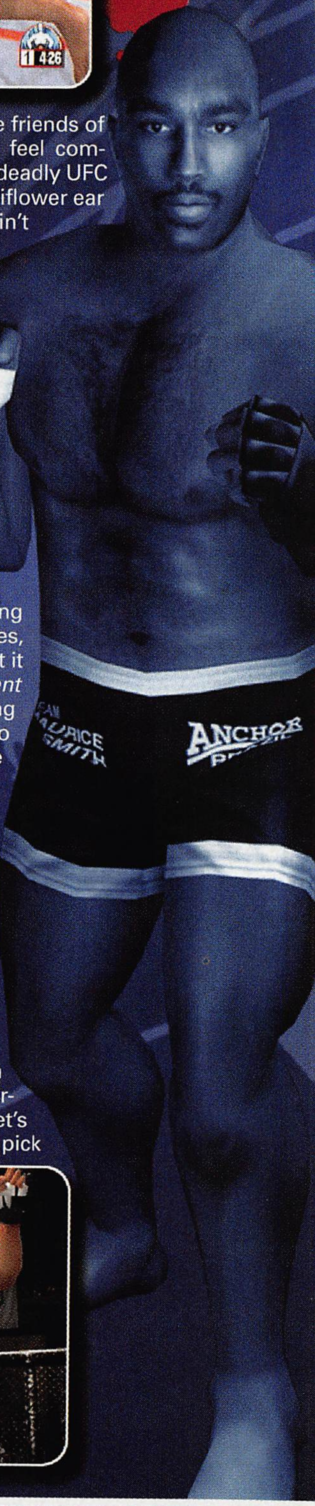


Dreamcast

Reviews



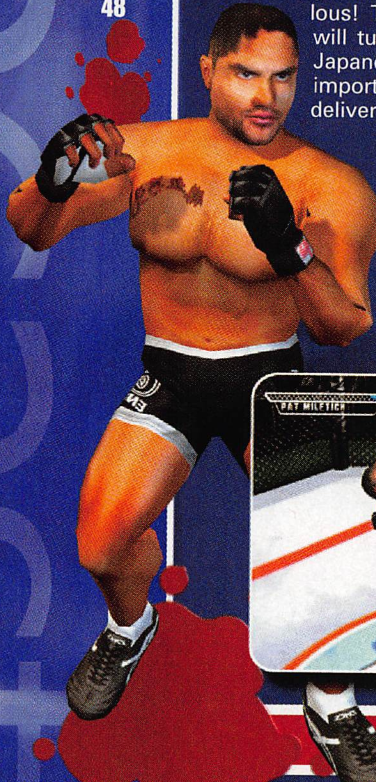




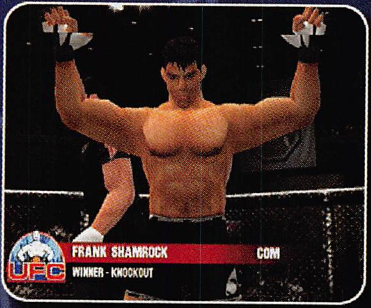
I have witnessed insanity at its finest as close friends of mine, though under this context I almost feel compelled to call them acquaintances, replicate deadly UFC bouts in their garage. This is no joke, the cauliflower ear my buddy has developed on his right side ain't exactly made out of latex. The poor guys, if only someone would have told them a game based on the Ultimate Fighting Championship was in development, perhaps they would have been spared those disfiguring injuries... not that I could have told them, I mean what else am I going to watch on the weekends <jeez! >.

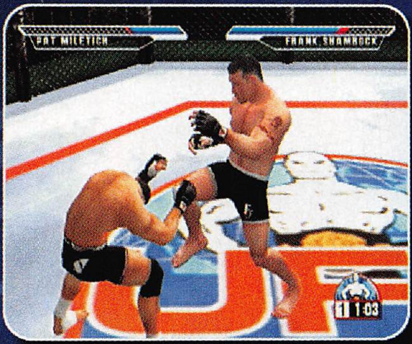
I'll be honest, I never thought Crave's upcoming UFC scrap-fest would get the star treatment reserved for games like *DOA2*, and likely go out like so many of shoddy wrestling games out there. After seeing the game at E3 though, I realized how wrong I was. But fighting game of the show? Unlike some of the online sites, I was certainly impressed but not to the point that it overshadowed games like *Tekken Tag Tournament* or *Street Fighter 3 Third Strike.* While the fighting system seemed solid, it still felt like the game needed some visual polish to bring it up too my high standards. Now I understand games really come together in their last few months of development, but this is ridiculous! This game is not only adequate for fans of the UFC, this one will turn heads of any hardcore fighting freak... and thanks to Japanese developer Anchor (the team also responsible for the import only, Naomi powered brawler, *Toy Fighter*), it manages to deliver all those lovely blood-curdling blows in magnificent form!

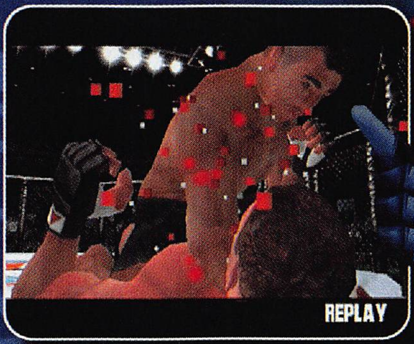
The first thing players are definitely going to notice when they boot *UFC* up is the enormous attention to detail. It's not like Anchor sat down and decided which were the best parts of the UFC to include; rather, they've seen fit to mimic EVERYTHING. Starting with the authentic "tale of the tape" stats chart, and leading to some very energetic fighter announcements by famed ringside spokesman Bruce Buffer, I nearly reached for my wallet to see if pay-per-view execs had made off with my twenty five bucks. And let's not forget the pre-fight character introductions... if I had to pick





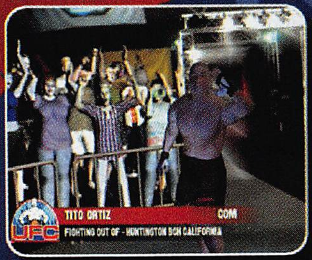


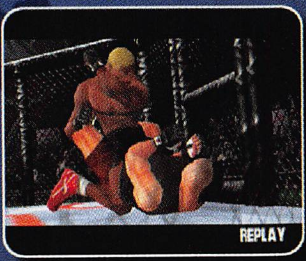




the single most impressive graphical feature about the game, this would be it! Were talking skin that looks like real flesh (though the muscles don't quite flex...perhaps third generation DC games will allow this?) detailed body anatomy including painstakingly defined six packs and arm muscles among others. Hell, even the hair on the fighter's chests look real. But the best part has got to be when the fighters first enter the arena and the crowd goes absolutely mad. As the fighters wave to the audience, fans excitedly snap their cameras in their direction and the effect as the flashes highlight the contenders just looks so damn cool!

"Lets get it on!" As far as the actual brawling is concerned, I can't even begin to wonder how long it took the developers to program all of the various fighting styles found in a single UFC tournament. But they're certainly in there, and let me tell you... it ain't going to take you just one night to figure them out (tons of added moves can also be unlocked as you progress through the game). While the controller setup is simple, with each of the four buttons used for basic striking and kicking, the challenge lies in discovering all of the lethal combinations. Of course like in the real UFC, grappling plays an integral







role in the carnage and button mashers beware... the computer AI won't hesitate for a second to turn your quick barrage of punches into a devastating turn around tap out hold. Loose a fight and its back to the beginning for you scrub!

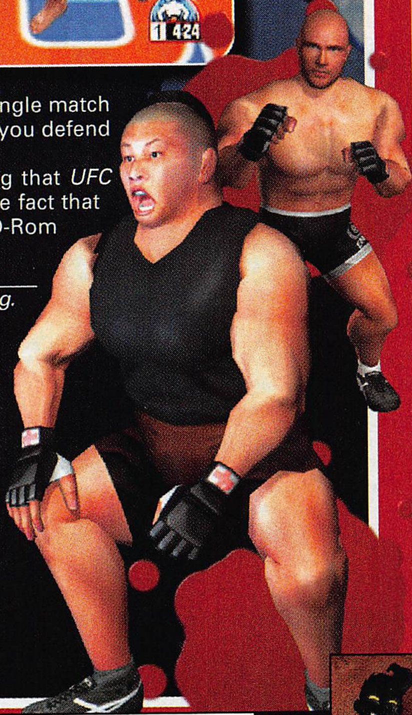
Oh what's that, you say you want a little replay value for your buck huh? Well Anchor has definitely gone the distance in this category. Along with a in depth career mode, the game sports four additional categories such as exhibition (for single match ups), UFC Mode (where you initially battle for the various belts) and Championship Road (where you defend your belt against twelve hungry competitors) and finally, a bit of training for the newbies.

Considering a number of the Anchor staffers are ex Namco programmers, its not surprising that *UFC* plays and looks as good as it does. Really the only dilemma the game faces upon release, is the fact that the UFC is not yet a household name. Once gamers see first hand the quality injected in this GD-Rom however, the UFC might want to search for larger arenas...I'll see you, in the Octagon!

Fury is trained in multiple disciplines as well, such as thumb wrestling, guilt tactics and professional bartering.







VIEWPOINT SCORE :90	DEVELOPER - ANCHOR	1-2 PLAYERS	FURY: TANK ABBOT
	PUBLISHER - CRAVE	AVAILABLE NOW	WOULD BE PROUD!

REVIEW

Dreamcast

A Little Bit of Tito

An interview with the UFC Middleweight Champion, Tito Ortiz

GF: I wanted to thank you for doing this interview with us and just to let you know I am a big fan. The game is awesome, and I think that it's gonna sell really big.
TO: I believe it's probably one of the biggest fighting games ever to come out because it's so realistic watching the game. I actually have the demo myself at home on Dreamcast.

GF: Well, let's get a little background on you what martial arts disciplines were you trained in and how many years have you basically been kicking people's asses?
TO: Well, actually I've been kicking people's assess since '97. That was the first time I got into the UFC. I wrestled in high school, collegiate wrestling. That was really the first kind of martial art I took. I went on to go to Golden West College here in California, which is a junior college that I wrestled at. There was a guy there, that actually used to fight in the UFC, called Tank Abbot. My high school coach was a friend of his and he needed a bigger guy to wrestle with and I filled that spot for him.

GF: He was cool, man. He didn't have all the training—he'd just step in there and kick ass.
TO: Well, that's the difference from the old UFC with the new ones. Guys are a lot more trained and skilled and if you tried to do that now it wouldn't really happen that easy 'cause the guys have so much style. You gotta have jujitsu, wrestling and kick boxing. It's not just a one sided sport anymore. It kind of changed over when they started putting weight classes; I believe over the last 2 1/2 years. Now, everyone has to learn jujitsu, has to learn boxing. Or else you're gonna come up short.

GF: How often do you train?
TO: I train 7 days a week, about 8 hours a day. My 7th day is a Sunday. That's kind of a half day is where I do everything about half speed. I train very, very hard.

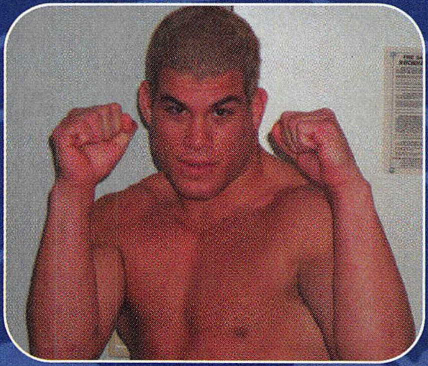
GF: How do you feel Crave has replicated your bad ass bone crushing abilities?
TO: Pretty much to the dot. I think it does have everything that I do. A lot like the video game character: the flames, my bleached hair, all the way to the tattoos on the back of my arms. It's amazing that those guys made it look as real as it is. There are doing a tremendous job. It just amazes me.

GF: Were you a big video game fan before Crave even approached you?
TO: Yes. I mean that's the second thing. When I'm not training I'm either watching my video games or I'm playing video games. I do play a lot of video games.

GF: Is there ever a period when you're fighting during a match that you're just completely exhausted. How do you kinda summon more energy?
TO: I guess you can kinda get a second wind from it. I mean there was one match for instance where I fought Frank Shamrock. I pushed my body so hard that I I was completely exhausted after the match and he was too. You want to prepare yourself for the worst and that's what I do now. I guess in that fight I didn't prepare myself for the worst. I ended up not being the victor in that one.

GF: If a gamer were playing as your character what would you say would be his most difficult match-up?
TO: I would probably say... (pauses) none of them. My character could probably take all of them just because of his hand speed and take down experience.

GF: Do you feel that this game will make the UFC more of a household name?



TO:
I hope so and I believe it will. Mixed martial arts just got sanctioned here in California. This video game is going to be an explosion to the mixed martial arts world. This is a guarantee. All of sudden you are going to get people who like video games are going to start liking UFC and youre going to get people from the UFC who are going to start liking video games. I believe this is going to be huge.

GF: What would be the dream match up you would like to see?
TO: Me and Frank Shamrock one more time. In the demo, it seems like my guy is a little bit stronger then him.

GF: Is there anything else you would like to say to your fans or anyone else reading this article?
TO: Yea. Be sure that they look at both sides of the video game and UFC and see how good they match up. Also check out *www.titoortiz.com.*

Anchor's Away!

Gamefan interviews Anchor team members Masahiro Onoguchi (Director) and Hiroshi Inukai (Planner)



GF: Can you explain how Anchor was formed? Was *Toy Fighter* the first game developed by the team?
Anchor: *Toy Fighter* is in fact the first game we worked on, from beginning to end, as Anchor. Our team members, however, have previously worked on other titles such as *Tobal 2* (Square), *Fighter's Destiny* (Ocean), *Fighting Vipers* (Sega), and *Jade Cocoon* (Crave), all prior to *Toy Fighter*.
When Anchor was originally formed, we had only three staff members, and they were mostly animators. By the time *Toy Fighter* was completed, the number of employees had swelled to seven. Currently, we have 15 people on staff working on *UFC*. At this exponential rate of growth, we will have 2,097,152 employees working at Anchor 10 years from now. We're only 2,097,137 short of that goal right now.

GF: Were you guys big fans of the UFC prior to this game?
Anchor: More than half the staff knew about UFC and were fans of fighting events prior to this project. However, the director didn't know who Maurice Smith was. He said, "How do you do?" twice to him at the UFC party, and he didn't recognize him. Afterwards, we ended up laughing greatly at his expense.

GF: Most developers have a difficult time developing a straight up fighter. How were you able to mix all the different fighting styles of the UFC in one game?
Anchor: There is a "fountain of ideas" inside the company, and all staff members are forced to drink of this water everyday. I'm not kidding. Our president was born from this fountain. Honestly.

GF: What kind of research did you guys end up doing for the game? And were any of your team tempted to step into the octagon themselves?
Anchor: Several staff members flew to America to see the UFC live and in person. They talked to the staff at these events and went inside the octagon. Everyone also went to UFC-J(apan) events and watched all the UFC videotapes.

GF: The animation in the game looks incredibly realistic. How were you able to accomplish this?
Anchor: We used Softimage to do the animation. We didn't use motion capture because we didn't think it would be in our best interests to use live action data in the game. Instead, we used our super-secret animation technique, because we believe our technique is among the best in the world.

GF: Did any of the UFC fighters request any particular moves or introduction animations be included?
Anchor: Yes, they also made requests on how they would appear. Someone told me that one of the fighters who played the game said that his character is weak in the game, so I'm thinking of adding some more powerful moves.

GF: We noticed the character intros mix 3D graphics and full motion video. Can you describe how this was done?
Anchor: Are you referring to the entrance movies for the fighters? Yes, this is a mixture of 3D graphics and full motion video. We did the camera animation first, then integrated the movie and animation elements accordingly. All of these are then combined together, just like what *Space Channel 5* did.

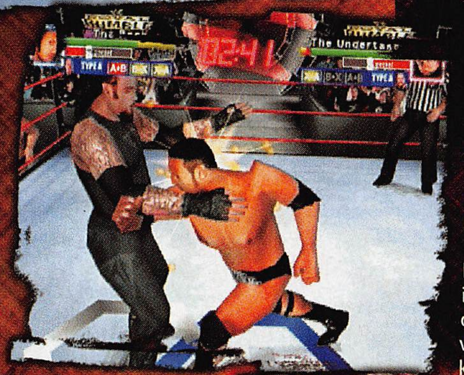
GF: Is it strange to see a game you've worked on for so long be released outside of your home country? Any chance this game will hit the Japanese market?
Anchor: Since the population of the US is twice of that of Japan, it is an honor to have twice as many players enjoy playing the game. In order to make more players happy, we are thinking of releasing the game in Japan as well.

GF: We're really interested in playing *Toy Fighter* in the U.S. Any chance that it will be released here on Dreamcast?
Anchor: Unfortunately, no. We're afraid if we release *Toy Fighter* in the U.S., too many people will get addicted and end up playing the game all day.

GF: Would you like to continue creating more fighting games, or are you planning to develop more games outside of the ring? Any news on your upcoming games?
Anchor: Anchor can create very exciting, "fun" games, because they know what is "fun" in a game. We also look forward to continuing the *UFC* franchise.

Special thanks to Rob "Pickle Power" Fleischer for making this feature possible.







I have a confession to make: I hate wrestling games. Now that won't come as a great surprise to many of you; especially to the long-time readers out there. Generally I rank them up (down?) there with dancing games, dating sims, and editing Fury's text on a monthly basis. But this wasn't always the case! Oh no, there was a time when you would find me happily mashing buttons to cries of "Crush his skull!" and "Smack him with that chair!" along with all the other wrestling miscreants that litter the U.S. of A. Games like *Pro Wrestling* (on NES—the Iron Claw **LIVES**!), *Mat Mania*, *WWF Superstars* and *WWF Wrestlefest* sucked away tens of dollars (this was back before a job was a pre-requisite for living—"C'mon Mom, just **five** dollars... please!"). Yep, it was a happy time... but you just knew it couldn't last.

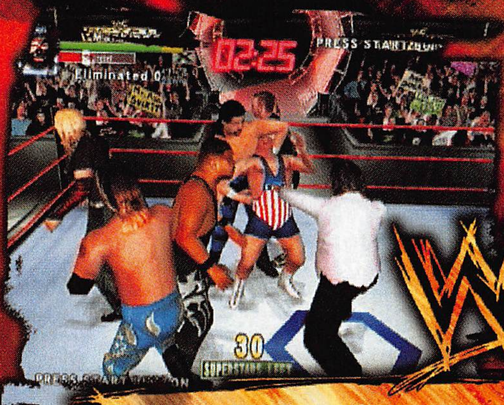
Once wrestling started to get even moderately popular (I still shudder when I think of the old Saturday morning cartoon... d'oh... <shudder>), it moved into the 'we all need a wrestling game' mentality of publishers once they get a hold of a good concept and proceed to flog the genre to death inside of two years. Pretty soon every big publisher had a wrestling game. THQ had *WCW* (and now *WWF*); EA with *WCW*; Acclaim with *ECW* (previously *WWF*); and even a bunch of lesser-known import titles abounded (the mighty *Fire Pro* amongst them). Yeah, what used to be fun got confusing, ugly and mired in a sea of average-at-best games. Most of them became so overshadowed by the *spectacle* of the 'sport' that they forgot all about what made wrestling games so much fun in the first place: the raw simplicity of it all. Enter THQ's new Dreamcast title, *WWF Royal Rumble*, a return to the days when games like *Wrestlefest* ruled the wrasslin' roost.

Now let me just make it painfully clear that the last time I even had a shred of fun with a wrestling game was with the immortal *Fire Pro Wrestling* on Saturn. It had it all: crazy moves, insane characters and best of all, crazy, **way** over-the-top 6 man battle royales! It even did my fondest *WWF Wrestlefest* memories justice. And amazingly enough, they've managed to capture a shred of that feeling in Yuke's latest.

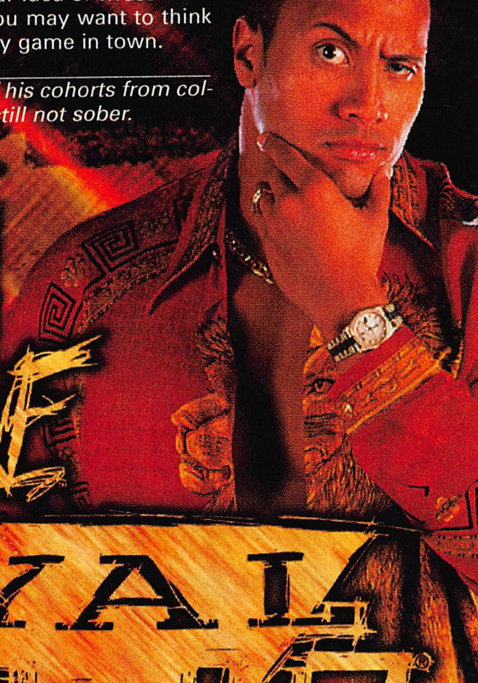
WWF features at least nineteen of the WWF's finest (though I use that term very loosely) going head-to-head in, what else, a Royal Rumble (what's royal about that, though, I hesitate to comment on). The goal is to knock 30 wrestlers out of the ring to be crowned king... ow. The controls are incredibly basic and even the Furys of the world can pick up and play within 30 seconds. The only problem with the Battle Royal mode is that the same wrestlers keep re-appearing albeit textured differently—it's a little disconcerting but when you see the sheer chaos of ten wrestlers in the ring at once pummeling one another you'll get over that little annoyance quickly.

To top it all off, this one's going to arcades as well. As with *Power Stone* (and before, that *Thunder Force 3*) this one's going in the opposite direction. Needless to say, if you're into wrestlers of old you could do a lot worse than give this one a whirl. If, however, your idea of wrasslin' nirvana is the recently-released *Wrestlemania 2K* you may want to think twice. However, for DC owners, it's really the only game in town.

ECM was rescued by GameFan, whereas most of his cohorts from college remain there, still playing Wrestlefest, *and still not sober.*







WWF ROYAL RUMBLE

Viewpoint Score	Developer - Yukes	1-4 Players	ECM: Wrestling
87	Publisher - THQ	Available Now	for the rest of us.

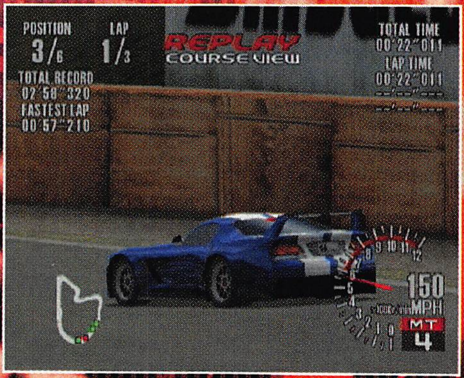
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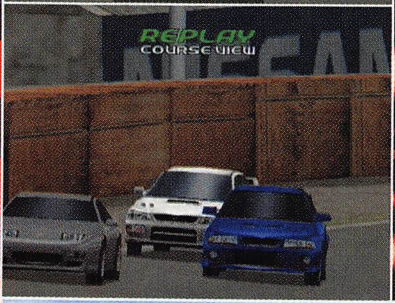
Dreamcast

Sega GT Homologation Special

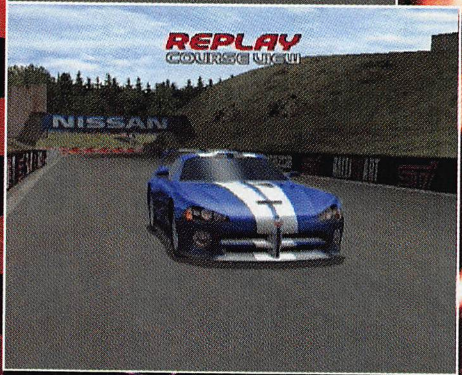




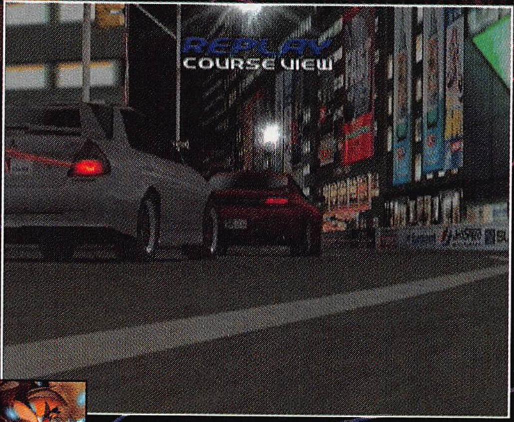


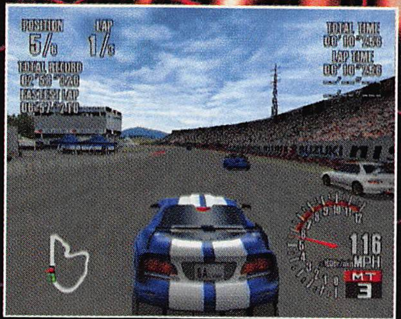












With amazing titles such as *Ferrari F355* and *Super GT* (as well as the *Daytona* and *Rally* series), Sega has shown time and time again that it can do racing games right. Arcade games (and a few notable console conversions) are almost always top notch for Sega, often capturing the staple of any good racer, namely sensation of speed. Sega seems to have strayed away from those racing roots with *Sega GT*, though, creating a game that is good, but fails to live up to the company's best efforts.

This is Sony territory, or so I'm told, and when Polyphony crafted *Gran Turismo*, it wasn't a fluke that the title went on to become a huge success. Yes, *Sega GT* does borrow heavily from *Gran Turismo*, whether it's the staggered Cup Events, modification options or the general feel of the game. Most of the game takes place in the Championship mode, where you try to beat several challenges using specific cars (limited by displacement, drivetrain, class, etc.). But Sony didn't invent the wheel with *GT*, and Sega seems to have taken the best and added a few new things for good measure. The Carzerria mode allows you to custom build a car, controlling almost every aspect, then enter special events designed solely for custom cars. You'll also find a VMU minigame in *Sega GT*.

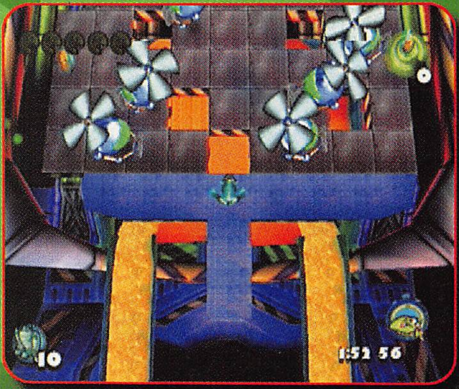
Unfortunately, there are quite a few problems with the game. First, while you can select between Grip or Drift in Quick Races, the option is not selectable during the Championship portion (read: meat) of the game. This might sound slight, but using almost any automatic transmission during a Championship race gives you a car that spins out and lists beyond any acceptable level. The biggest transgression of all is the glaring omission of any sensation of speed. Whether you're driving an NSX at upwards of 250 MPH or a junker at 60, the difference is slight. It's not to say that the game doesn't look fast, or on the pleasant side of graphical bliss, but the difference between fast and fastest is not what I hoped it to be and left me scratching my head in disbelief. When you have a great looking racer, complete with above standard car models, why skimp on the gameplay? Sadly, the first Sega foray into 'sim-style' racing screetches to a halt very quickly, and ultimately feels borrowed and very old.

Kodomo used to run fast, but now stays at a constant pace.

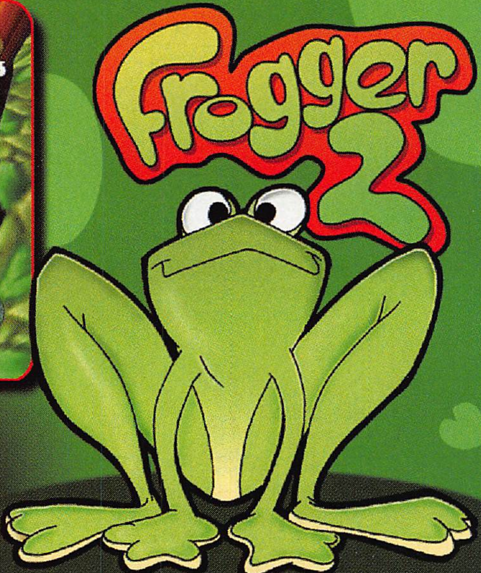


R REVIEW	Kodomo: *Gran Turismo* on your DC?	Developer - Sega	1-2 Players	Viewpoint Score :80
		Publisher - Sega	Available Sep	


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Some games are just plain bulletproof. Case in point: *Frogger*. This criminally bad title sold an obscene number of copies two years ago, making it one of the highest selling titles of the year. Bad graphics, bad gameplay and bad reviews apparently were not enough to keep this game from steam-rolling the competition. Go figure.

It's sequel time and no system is safe from *Frogger 2*, more madcap hopping adventures from Hasbro. With two modes of play, numerous frogs to control and gameplay that has further removed itself from that of the original arcade title, *Frogger 2* is now a platformer.

While the developers did little to push the powers of the Dreamcast, the game is nonetheless a giant leap forward in the looks department, featuring some flashy colors, cutesy character design and some attractive, if not simplistic, textures. The closest game I can compare it to, in the level design department, is the recently released *Ms. Pac-Man* update from Namco (a much better gaming experience, incidentally), with many corridors to run down, enemies moving on tracks to avoid, and pick-ups to collect. While the gameplay experience has evolved quite a bit from the original jumping from log to turtle to gator, this style of action can still be found throughout the game, in various forms.

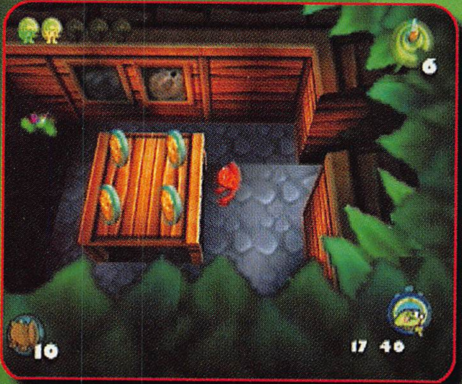


Admittedly not as bad as its predecessor, *Frogger 2* still lacks the ever important control. The frog still delays slightly before executing your actions and you need to press the d-pad for every hop, which can become tedious and even deadly. When hopping quickly down a long corridor, you may rapidly press too many times and go off a cliff, into an enemy or such. The jumping, too, can be aggravating, although not as difficult in other games when it comes to precision jumps. There are only four directions you can face in *Frogger 2*, so the pitfalls of 3D platforming will not affect you, when you are trying to make jumps to small areas surrounded by danger, a la *Rayman 2* and *MediEvil*.

A basic title, *Frogger 2* does have enough redeeming qualities to make it enjoyable to younger or inexperienced players, but vets will cringe at its slipshod delivery. As the nostalgia craze begins to wane, I am curious to see just how bulletproof this title is...

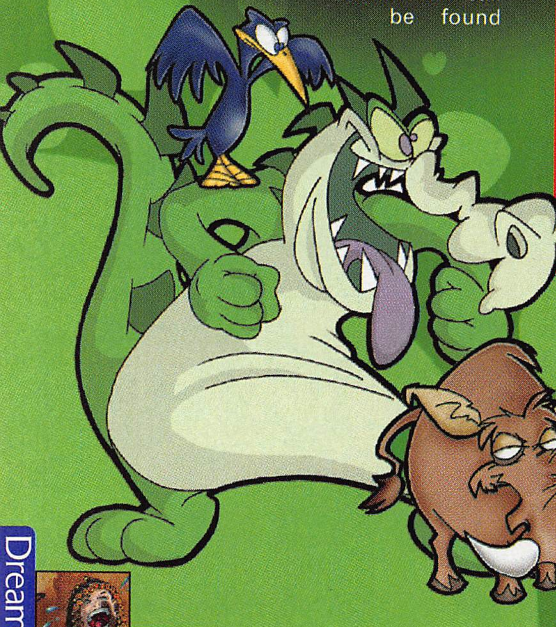
The Judge is of the opinion that to be frog by species is much more preferable than being a frog by nationality.













REVIEW THE JUDGE: "Not so smart, with lots of heart, is Freddy the Frog..."	Developer - Blitz	1-2 Players	Viewpoint Score: 68
	Publisher - Hasbro	Available Sep	

COMING SOON

Dreamcast

Grandia 2

Developer	Publisher
Game Arts	**Ubi Soft**

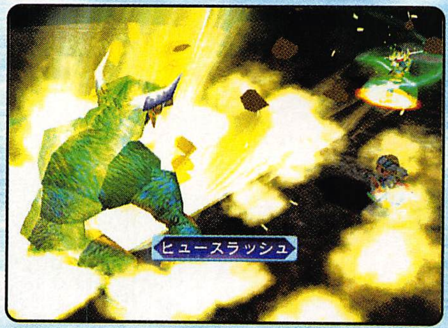
Game Arts' first Dreamcast game looks awesome. Unlike the original *Grandia* on PS, which suffered from questionable voice acting, *Grandia 2* will have voices done by the *Metal Gear Solid* actors. Sweet!









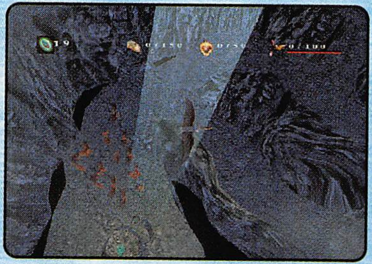


Dinosaur

Developer	Publisher
Sandbox	**Ubi Soft**

You've seen the movie. You've played the game... on PlayStation. Now you can play it on Sega's next-generation console! Pick one of three characters and explore the world as a good deed-doing dinosaur.

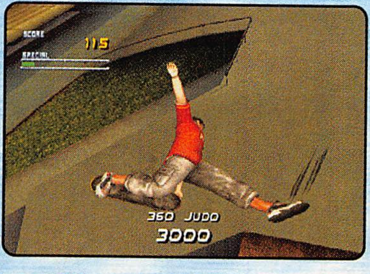


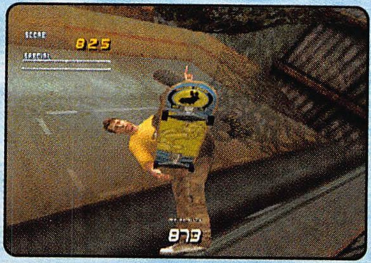


Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

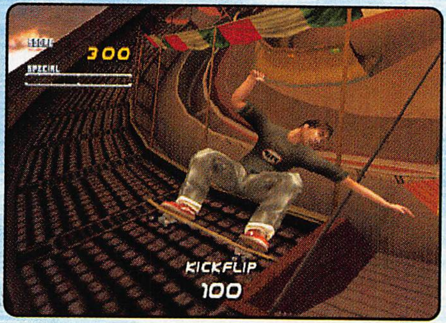
Developer	Publisher
Neversoft	**Activision**

This game speaks for itself. *THPS* is a runaway best-seller on every platform. The sequel is coming and it'll feature music from Rage Against the Machine, Anthrax, Papa Roach, Powerman 5000, Bad Religion, and more.













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Over 8000 frames of animation
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PlayStation

Reviews



Previews





TENCHU 2

BIRTH OF THE ASSASSINS

Tenchu 2: Death of an Assassin is more like it. I don't know why it is, but *Tenchu 2* and I have not hit it off in our short time together. It simply isn't in the stars for this ninja gamer and this game about ninjas to see eye to eye. It all started on that ill-fated day...

Tenchu 2 begins with a training mission which you must complete before getting to the actual game. But this is no ordinary training mission. It's up there with *Driver* and *Star Trek: Invasion* as being obscenely difficult for a tutorial which **cannot** be skipped—surely it is the work of Lucifer himself. How else can you explain a training mission which expects you to discover two 'hidden' areas to finally reach the finish line? If you don't have a wandering '*Tomb Raider* eye' or a walkthrough, don't expect to get to the actual game for a while. I'm all for hard games because I think games are too easy these days, but when a tutorial becomes frustrating and prevents me from playing the actual game, I take issue with it.

When the real game started, things improved greatly. Line of sight was not really an issue any more. In training, you'd see an empty outdoor area ahead of you, but take a few steps forward and a full house or hill would materialize a few feet ahead of you (this was a pain when you're trying to get your bearings without a map, wandering an area that you can't see far in the distance). Speaking of maps, *Tenchu 2* offers some improvement over the original here, as the map has changed from being completely useless to somewhat helpful. It now shows your current location, but the scribbles that constitute walls, roads, and buildings look like they were penciled by an epileptic six-year-old... on a plane in heavy turbulence. If you can decipher the true meaning behind these hieroglyphs, they probably reveal the true location of the Holy Grail, but alas, my translation skills are not what they once were...



Tenchu 2 offers the usual bunch of improvements you'd expect in a sequel: more weapons, larger levels, and added gameplay tweaks... all of which make for a more realistic and enjoyable



experience. It's much easier to be detected now as guards will be alarmed upon finding a comrade's corpse (which can be dragged away to avoid detection). There's more traps (e.g, weight plates and a tripwire with bells) to keep an eye out for too, but you won't be without new techniques of your own. Owners of an expanded arsenal (blowguns, flaming arrows, and blinding dust), Rikimaru and Ayane have also acquired the ability to swim in deep water and breathe underwater using a hollow reed. Also, once you've beaten the game with both characters, a third character, Tatsumaru, becomes selectable with his own unique missions.

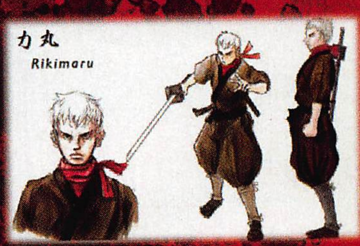
Unfortunately, the two areas where the sequel could've benefited most received virtually no attention—the graphics and the camera. Both were sloppy in the original, and I still wince at seeing 'transparent' building textures and head-spinning camera work during the fighting.

One cool feature in *Tenchu 2* is the mission editor, which lets you create your own levels. You have control over most of the game elements: everything from placing trees and buildings to altering the mission objective. It's all incredibly simple and intuitive. You can even choose the path a guard will take on his patrol rounds. Once a level is complete, you can save it to memory card and challenge a friend to demonstrate his ninja skills on your work of art.

In the end, *Tenchu 2* is slightly above average. With over 20 missions plus the construction kit, there's a lot of gameplay to be had here. Yet despite being a huge fan of the original, I'm not wowed by the sequel. The graphics are dated, and the camerawork is unforgivable for a game this late in the PlayStation's lifecycle (what are we in now, fifth generation software?). Perhaps a PS2 *Tenchu* can fix some of these problems... hopefully.

Eggo would like to know where all these hot ninja babes are today...







Viewpoint Score	Developer - Activision	1 Player	Eggo: When you snatch the pebble from my hand...
:79	Publisher - Activision	Available Now	

R REVIEW

PlayStation







DESTRUCTION DERBY RAW™

While most of the first generation PlayStation series have moved to greener pastures in the land of the PS2 (e.g., *Tekken*, *Ridge Racer*, and *WipeOut*), a few continue to languish for at least one last thrill on Sony's aging system. This is fine for a game like *FF9*, but others should have quit long ago. Take *Destruction Derby* for instance...

What was once an enjoyable first generation PS game, has steadily declined with each successive outing, showing little to no improvement... until now it resides sadly in the realm of 'must avoid.'

Apart from the addition of *Raw* to the moniker, you'd be hard pressed to find anything new here. You know the drill: Get a junky car, race against 19 others, and meet point requirements to get to the next track. You'll get staggered points for finishing the race, but you can't simply finish first to win. During the race, you'll have to smash cars and gain points by creating spins and flips. Unfortunately, whether it's the staggered "Wreckin' Racing" tournament or the "Smash 4 $" game, there just isn't a lot of gameplay to be found here, thanks largely to the 'liberal' awarding of points (or lack thereof). "Wreckin' Racing" puts you in the hunt for several Cups, which will ultimately unlock hidden cars, while "Smash 4 $" lets you buy a car and upgrade it with the money you win, under the guise of league play.



Both modes use the same tracks, which are filled with chaotic crossovers and car-slammin' straightaways. While many of the 10+ tracks are large, most are variations of a single track, and they seemingly exist only to show the clipping and pop-up limitations of the PlayStation. Sure, there have been exceptional racers on the PS, but this doesn't come close to any of them.





A few people around the office have walked by and said that *DDR* looks 'choppy,' but I disagree. Waves are choppy. To see *DDR* is to see what it would be like to play a game with one eye closed and a strobe light on. Best case scenario, the frame rate is in the mid-teens, and at the bottom of the barrel it drops to single digits. Oddly enough, this drop-off coincides remarkably with the lasting appeal of the game (even with the amusing multi-player games), which peaks in the land of 'average' and goes south very quickly. Bottom line: Avoid it like the plague, and wish ill on anyone who gives it to you. **K**







R REVIEW	KODOMO: NO MORE, PLEASE!	DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS PUBLISHER - MIDWAY	1-4 PLAYERS AVAILABLE SEP	VIEWPOINT SCORE :50


THE DARK KNIGHTS TOYED WITH THEIR BLOODY
TROPHIES BEFORE DISGARDING THEM LIKE THE REST
Become empowered with deadly magical spells.
Vanquish your enemies with seven powerful Heroes.
Battle in a Special RPG DeathMatch mode.
KINGDOM UNDER FIRE
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Strange as it sounds, life isn't easy for wee MegaMan. Sure, he's got the tricked out armor and blaster (not to mention the peppy Roll by his side), but his work is never done. All he wants to do is sit around the retired character home (you know, the place where Kid Icarus lounges in the sun waiting for inevitable slow death), but he keeps getting called back into action. If it isn't platform games, it's fighting games. If it isn't fighting games, it's putting in overtime as a hidden character in a certain new DC shooting game. And now, just to keep him from getting fat once again (okay, *maybe* he was super deformed...), he's back in *MegaMan Legends 2*.

Roll's grand-pappy's gotten into a little trouble, and it's up to our hero to save the day. Unfortunately, nothing is as easy as it seems and the crew soon find themselves racing against pirates to find treasure called the Mother Lode. Traveling to various towns, locales and dungeons via his flying ship (aided by a new 3D world map), he must find the 4 keys and get the treasure first.

The cast of supporting characters is very strong, with both Roll and Data the monkey assisting the mechanical blue wonder. You'll have to rely on both characters to assist in your quest. Roll is an expert mechanic and can upgrade weapons or even combine 2 parts to manufacture new equipment. Data, when not dancing around, will allow you to save/load games, in addition to replenishing health and giving you vital tips on what to do. This works well, taking the 'certain weapon defeats certain enemy' aspect of the original game and giving a previously unseen level of depth and customization.

The enemies consist mainly of the Bonne family (including the notorious Tron and her army of loyal servebots), with special Reaverbots thrown in preiodically during missions. Unfortunately, while the mild RPG elements and storyline (fueled by a surprisingly impressive graphical engine) are above average, most of the combat leans too far into 'shoot while always strafing' to become fully enjoyable. When the same simple tactic works time and time again, it's tough to become enthralled (even with all the pluses). As a sequel goes, it's much better than the first, but deserves little more than a rental.

Kodomo's always had a thing for anime chick/monkey fantasies.

















R REVIEW	KODOMO: NOT QUITE SOLID AS A ROCKMAN...	DEVELOPER - CAPCOM PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE OCT	VIEWPOINT SCORE :78


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DYNASTY WARRIORS 2
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Buy it with your PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system!
Play as one of 9 legendary warriors battling on foot and horseback!
Join the ranks of heroes of old as you fight through hundreds of merciless warriors for the greatest prize of all — China!
Witness extraordinary graphics on battlefields of truly epic proportions!
TEEN
T
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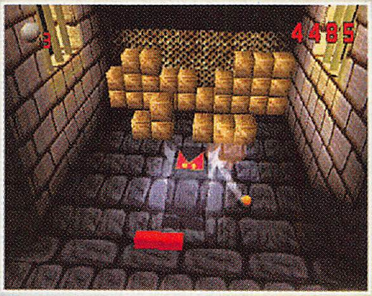


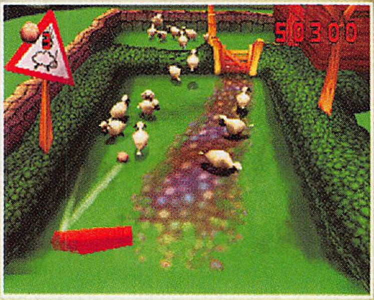
Once again Hasbro is unleashing upon us updated versions of the classics that kicked off the industry. Atari's *Breakout* was one of the earliest and most enjoyable, but even with a face-lift and some added features, *Breakout* is far from breakthrough.

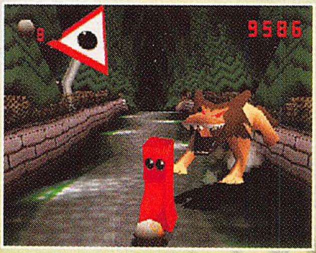
For all of the troglodytes that don't know what it is, *Breakout* was the game where you essentially did nothing more than play air hockey against a wall. Your goal was to break all of the blocks with your ball without letting it get past you. Fast reflexes and a good sense of trajectory are what separated the great players from the weaksauce in *Breakout*. Skills that are still needed to excel in this update. Unfortunately, the facelift is far from a good one, exhibiting graphics that make me wish I was playing my old *Arkanoid* machine instead of this new millennia PlayStation product.

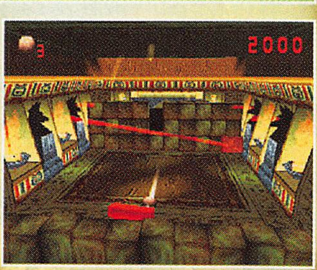
The feeble attempt at connecting the boards with a bit of story falls flat and will annoy those that just want to get to the next level. Not since the AMC Theatres celluloid guy have I been so annoyed by a mascot more. Your "bat" is actually a little guy that looks like a hamster's gnaw stick with googly eyes; a little silly.

Frivolous extras aside, there is still a solid game in there, and the multiplayer gives you a bit of that old *Warlords* flavor. It is just hard to swallow this as a stand-alone product.











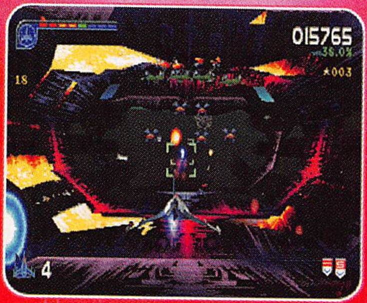
BREAKOUT

R REVIEW			
THE JUDGE: I'D STILL RATHER BE PLAYING ARKANOID.	DEVELOPER - SUPERSONIC PUBLISHER - HASBRO	1-4 PLAYERS AVAILABLE 4TH QTR	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 70

Galaga







A little slicker than *Breakout* is *Galaga: Destination Earth*. While it too is nothing more than an updated version of the classic shooter, the implementation of 3D and the new play angle allows for a fresh gaming experience. The cut scenes are on par with many other PlayStation titles (and about as necessary) and the overall control is strong.

Still hurting, though, are the graphics which, while mildly interesting to those that are familiar with the original, quickly lose their novelty value and then rightfully take their place in the ranks of the mediocre.

While much of the gameplay is straight out of the original, additional action has been added. There are sequences of over-the-shoulder flying where you need to navigate asteroid fields, blow up hostiles and pick up power ups. These can be quite challenging later on, but ultimately suffer from their camera angle and can become frustrating.

Ultimately this title falls into rank with *Breakout* as an interesting time killer that has a hard time standing alone. A much better idea would have been to put both games on one CD with *Frogger 2* and release it as a party pack.

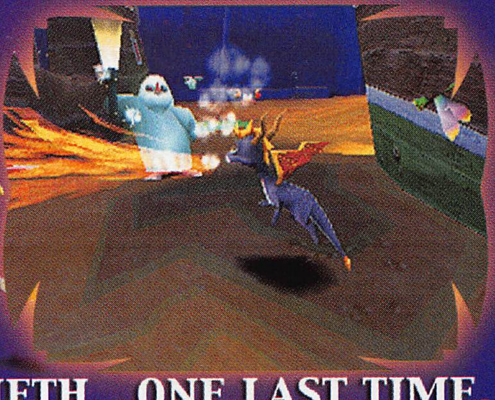




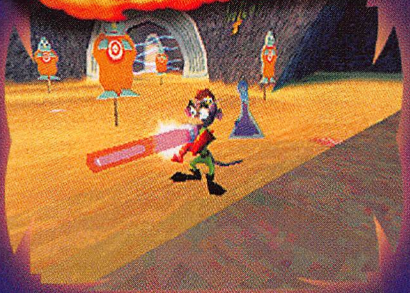
R REVIEW			
THE JUDGE: I'D STILL RATHER BE PLAYING PHOENIX.	DEVELOPER - KING OF THE JUNGLE PUBLISHER - HASBRO	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE SEP	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 71

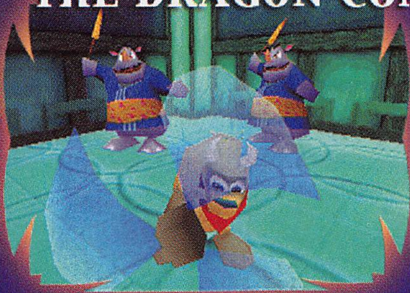
Spyro: Year of the Dragon™





THE DRAGON COMETH...ONE LAST TIME.







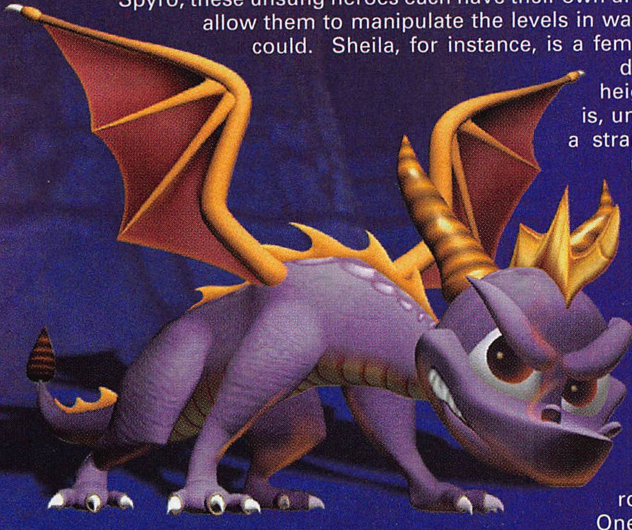
Last week, after checking out Kodomo's new pad in Hollywood, I spotted a peculiar looking individual on the way back to my car. Shaking violently and huddled in an Obi-Wan-like robe, the stranger kept his face well-hidden. Using my superpowers to ascertain his true identity, I realized this was no ordinary beggar... oh dear, no! "Why, Croc? Why you?" I pleaded. But it was too late, the harsh realities of life on the street had already warped the old boy's mind. He just sat there, mumbling something I'd rather not repeat about Fox Interactive. "Please Croc, take this. It's not much but it might be enough to help you get back on your feet... err claws," I said. Snatching the few dollars out of my hand, he headed for a nearby bar. Concerned, I followed him in and made a startling discovery. I had found the very place where video game mascots go when their sequels end and their merchandising winds up in the bargain bin. From one end of the bar to next the place was packed with familiar faces—Bubsy, Joe and Mac, and Toe Jam (luckily, Earl went sober and now owns a place near the local Y). However, one bar stool remained empty. "We're saving that seat for Spyro," muttered Bug the barkeep. Perhaps, but not till he finishes with his final PlayStation outing, *Spyro: Year of the Dragon.*



Despite being geared towards a younger audience, *Spyro* has continually proven itself to be one of the PlayStation's finest platformers. But alas, with the release of *Ripto's Rage* last year, the series appeared to be following our old buddy Crash downward, as originality began fading from the picture. And while the premise in Spyro's latest doesn't exactly evoke a great deal of excitement, it does offer a set of play mechanics that easily makes this installment the most entertaining of the bunch.



While *Year of the Dragon* for the most part doesn't stray far from Spyro's roots, it stakes some new ground by allowing players to choose from multiple playable characters. Like Spyro, these unsung heroes each have their own unique set of attacks and abilities that allow them to manipulate the levels in ways the little dragon only wished he could. Sheila, for instance, is a female Kangaroo with an outstanding double jump, allowing her to reach heights which few others could. That is, unless you're playing Sergeant Byrd, a strange-looking feathered friend who resembles a penguin. While the Sarge doesn't quite have the most impressive wingspan, he can fly about the stages with the greatest of ease. Get in his way, though, and you might just wind up the recipient of a smoking missile, courtesy of the Sarge's dual rocket launchers... and you thought this was going to be your typical *Spyro* game, bah! Other new characters include a massive club-wielding Yeti and a bizarre space monkey named Agent 9... hmm, I wonder if the guys at Insomniac are fans of "Monkey" from the *Power Puff Girls*?



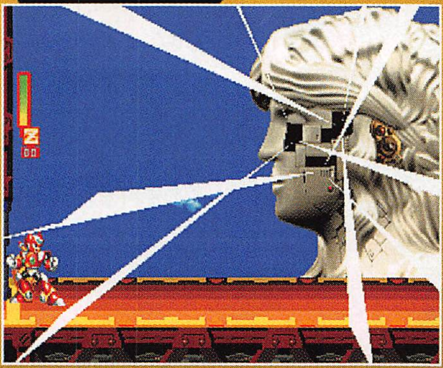
With a ton of new mini games to keep things interesting and a new cast of oddballs to liven up the mood, it appears Insomniac has given Spyro a proper final outing. Hopefully when the game is completed, the end result will be enough to pull hungry gamers away from the hype surrounding the PlayStation 2. Perhaps investing in one of those nifty PS Ones ain't such a bad idea after all. **F**

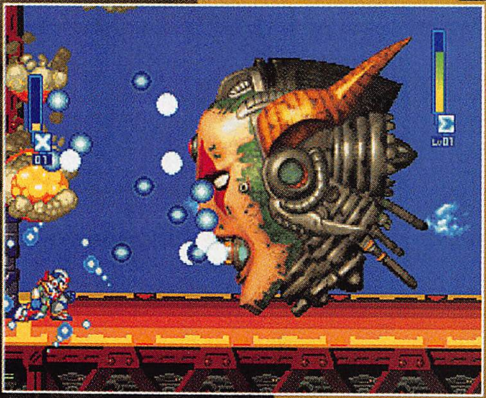
DEVELOPER - INSOMNIAC	1 PLAYER	FURY: SHOULDN'T THE LITTLE
PUBLISHER - SCEA	AVAILABLE NOV	GUY BE GETTING BIGGER BY NOW?

R REVIEW



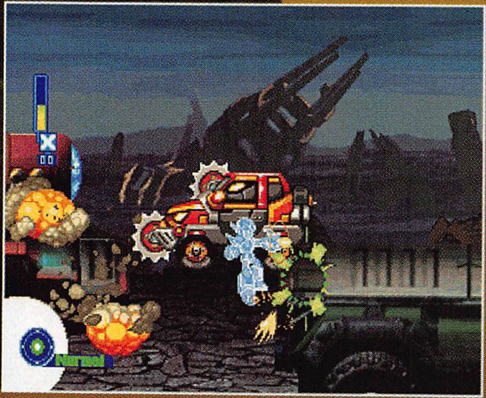
MEGAMAN X5





8 Billion Served

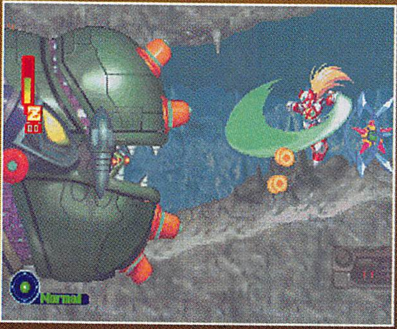
Sometimes ya just gotta ask: When is enough, enough? I mean, it's not bad enough that there are already 17, 875,363 *MegaMan* games available right now on nearly every console since the heady days of the NES, but in this issue alone we have three games that star the 'Blue Bomber;' another with a guest-starring role (*Cannon Spike*); and to top it all off, I just scored a copy of *MegaMan: Wiley Wars* off of eBay—though I guess I can't blame Capcom for the latter. Don't get me wrong, I like my hourly dose of *MM* as much as the next guy (or gal) but there comes a time when you just have to say "enough!" (or 'enow'... depending on my penchant for melodrama at that particular instant) and move on. In fact the only bright ray of light in this sudden case of MegaManMadness™ comes from the fact that *MegaMan X5* is 2D—that's what it takes these days to get me really worked up over any game starring the little blue chap.



As Subtle as a Boomerang

Yep, Keiji Inafune's (the creator of *MM* and the upcoming PS2 *Onimusha*) little baby blue, err, baby is probably the single most prolific video game character of all time. Sure, Mario, Sonic, and some of the other old-timers have made it a rule to appear in new titles every 6-12 months (though even they've been taking a lot more R&R in recent years), MegaMan's one-upped 'em all as he tends to crop up once every 6-12 *weeks*, and he's right on schedule once again... <argh>.

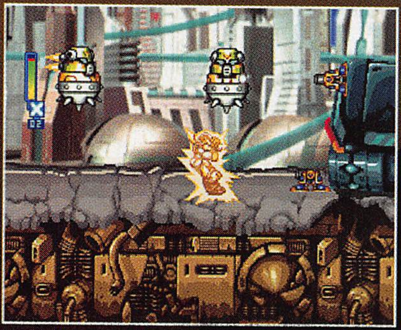
In the plus column, however, it's a return to the familiar 2D digs that made him a superstar. In the debit, though, it's as the 'hip and cool' *X* incarnation that made its debut at the dawn of SNES gaming sans Rush, Dr. Light, Dr. Wiley and all the things that make MegaMan cool... but I digress.

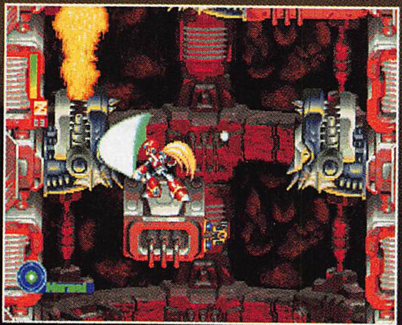


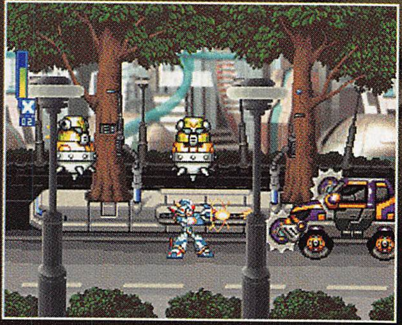
Tell Me Something About Yourself

So what's MegaMan up to this time? Well, to be brutally honest, the same thing he's been up to for the past fifteen or so years: pick a level, play through various parallax-infused stages slapping down robotic foes, face down a boss based on an animal of some sort, beat, repeat. And that's about it. The same formula that has applied to nearly every *MegaMan* game since the dawn of time is also, <gasp>!, applicable here. Believe it or not, though, it's still fun.

This one's set to go in the 4th quarter and we'll be back next issue with (at the very least) some decent Viewpoint scores. Now I beg of you Capcom—please, please, please give Arthur (you know, the guy from *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*) another shot at the crown. Just imagine, if we even got one *Strider* or *Ghouls* game for every 5 *MegaMan* games we'd have about 57,000 of each... **ECM**







PREVIEW	ECM: No... more... please... <gurgle>	Developer - Capcom Publisher - Capcom	1 Player Available Nov

Deuce



How does this work? A system has to look death square in the eye to get a string of decent platformers? I realize most developers have started phasing out their PlayStation development in favor of the über PlayStation 2, but why the sudden rush to release games that classically have not been among the PS's more popular genres? *Spyro: Year of the Dragon*, *MediEvil 2*, and *Deuce*... man, if only the Saturn could have gone out like this.

Confusing things even further, I'm staring at a PS platformer... from Midway, of all people. That's right, Midway... the fine makers of a million and one different games up until now, but no platformers (at least, none worth mentioning). While you'd think they'd be saving such a game for the upcoming X-Box or the PS2, they've instead decided to toss their newest creation atop the PS's aging hardware. And to tell ya the truth, *Deuce* doesn't even look half-bad. In fact, if it took this long to get PS one games to look this solid, I can't wait to see what the second, third and fourth generation PS2 games will look like... Oh I know, they'll be really jagged and run super fast.





From what I played in our preview copy, it looks like Midway is trying to separate *Deuce* from the rest of the "kiddy" platformers available. While the characters in the game are based on simple playing cards (much like the deck of card army from "Alice in Wonderland") things turn increasingly morbid right at the start of level one. From the ghastly screams coming from beyond the Heart Castle walls to the constant banging of the invading spade army as they literally attempt to tear down the doors around you, you're often left to encounter the bodies of your fallen comrades. Their wounds are not in vain though, they fought for good of the "deck" and the safety of playing cards throughout the Kingdom. Unfortunately for *Deuce*'s sake, the lowly soldier appears to be the only one courageous enough (or stupid) to take on the ruthless marauders.





As I stated before, the visuals in *Deuce* are some of the best I've seen on PlayStation. Like in SCEA's own platformer *MediEvil*, the color scheme found in the game is extremely dark and really adds to the sensation of impending doom. Staircases have huge gaping holes where catapults have done their handiwork and enemy soldiers are lurking all about ready to relieve Deuce of his post and of course... his life. But strangely enough, the action is not always so grim. At the end of the first level, Deuce faces off against an opponent three times his size. Realizing how effortlessly he could reduce the brave knight to mince-meat, Deuce is instead offered a chance to compete in a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors. Indeed, quite a strange twist on a game with such a serious mood.





What can I say, *Deuce* is a Midway game and it's got nothing to do with *Blitz* or *San Francisco Rush* (thank heavens!!). Sure, at the end of the day that might not guarantee heaping amounts of cash, but it does say something about the company just wanting to produce cool-ass games. So put down those rosters and playbooks, folks, and turn your attention to that lonely deck of cards your Mom saved for those looong car trips, cause *Deuce* is scheduled for a third quarter release. Only a few short months to practice your poker face and doubling down... **F**

Developer - Midway	1 Player	Fury: The real way to play
Publisher - Midway	Available 3rd Qtr	War—with a set of cards.

P PREVIEW

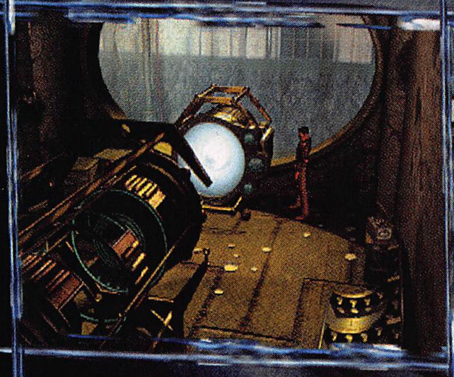
IN COLD BLOOD™

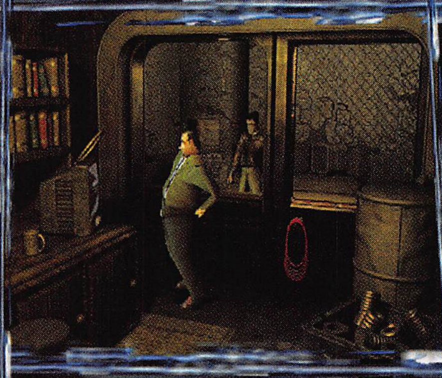
Arms raised, hatchet poised, a bead of sweat trickling down my fevered brow, I felt my muscles tense as I summoned the strength for the critical blow. Before me, lying helpless on the desk and looking up with the most innocent eyes lay the unassuming two-disc set for Midway's latest adventure, *In Cold Blood*. Just as I was about to drop the hatchet, forever severing any chances this game had to sell, I heaved a deep sigh and lowered my weapon. Why not... I'll give it another chance. Popping the disc in one last time, I gave it a whirl again, and miracle of all miracles, it got better. Staying the fatal blow, I decided a reprieve was in order. This game did not deserve to be dispatched... at least, not so soon, and not in cold blood. It deserves a fighting chance.

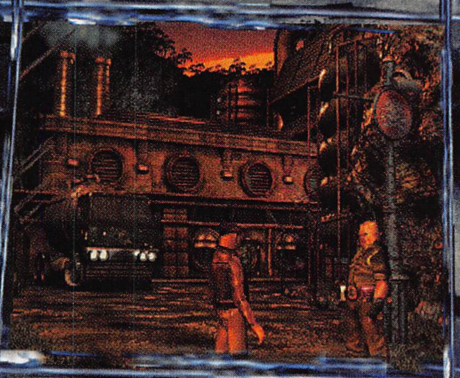


When I first played *ICB*, the animation pained me. The main character jittered about, without the frames of animation necessary for precise movements. Imagine playing *Resident Evil* with a main character who has only five frames of animation for walking and running. See how hard it would be to check a room for objects if getting to the exact spot you want is a chore? That's what it was like playing *In Cold Blood* at first, but the deeper I progressed, the better it played... and the more forgiving I became of the animation.



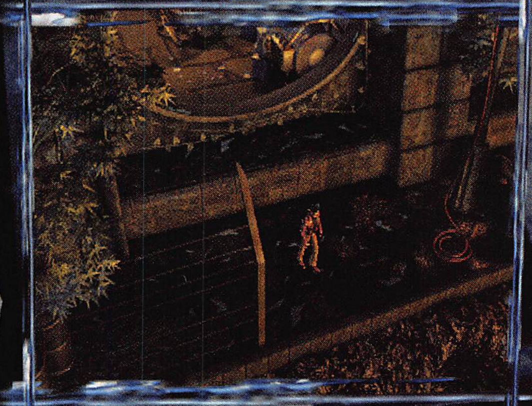






The game begins with you, MI5 Secret Service Agent John Cord, captured and being interrogated by the enemy. You've been betrayed, and as your captors try to squeeze every last ounce of information out of you, the flashbacks and memories begin to roll... Flashing back to the start of the mission, you begin the game infiltrating the enemy compound to discover the whereabouts of a fellow secret agent who's been captured, but somehow managed to escape. Disguised as a delivery man, Cord sneaks into the enemy base, and from there, it's up to you to discern what to do. Eventually, the game's events lead up to your capture, as it comes full circle with the interrogation at the beginning.

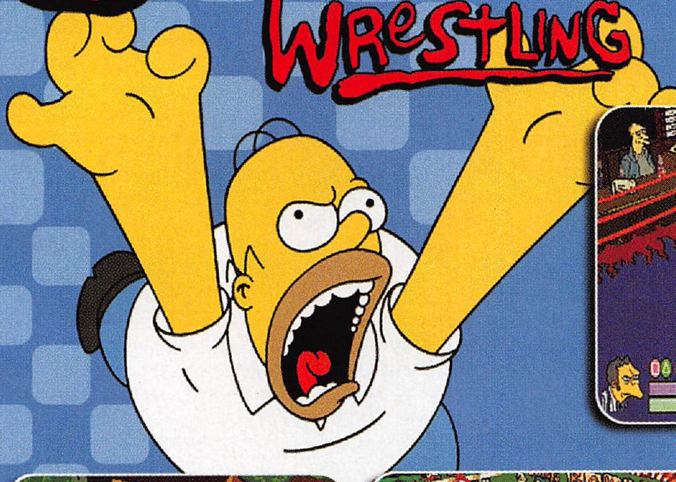
In Cold Blood's gameplay is an interesting hybrid: a mix of stealthy espionage (a la *Metal Gear Solid*) and head-scratching puzzle-solving, reminiscent of *Out of This World*. Also like *OoTW*, expect a lot of frustrating deaths, as you explore areas you shouldn't. Consider it one big game of trial and error. In an age of "all too easy" games, *ICB* offers a refreshing challenge. Now if only Revolution manages to increase the amount of character animation, *In Cold Blood* shows a lot of promise. Stay tuned for the final word as we see whether a full pardon is in order. E

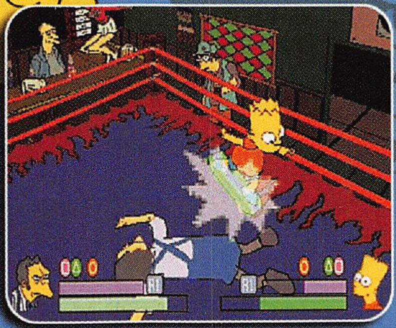


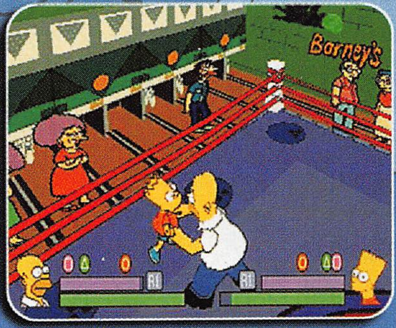
P PREVIEW	EGGO: SO MANY SECRET AGENTS, SO LITTLE TIME...	DEVELOPER - REVOLUTION	1 PLAYER
		PUBLISHER - MIDWAY	AVAILABLE 4TH QTR

The Simpsons™ Wrestling

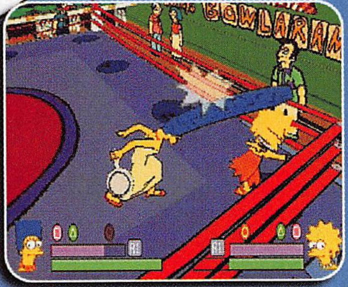


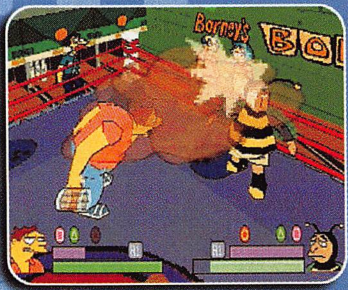


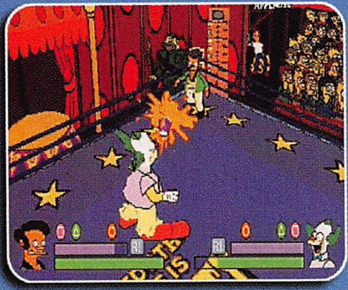










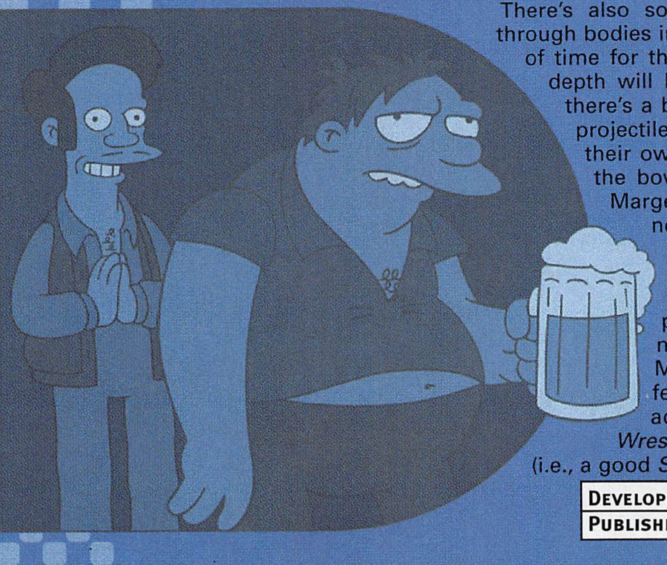


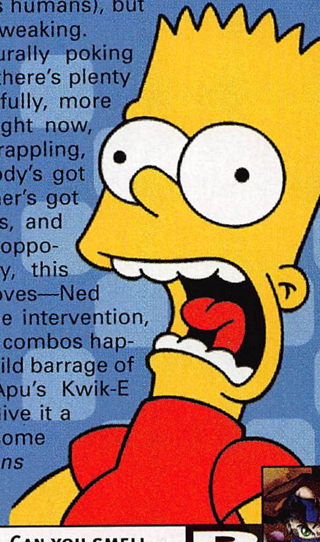
Looking back at the long line of *Simpsons* games (Groening's characters do get around in the video game world), there's few hits (the *Simpsons* arcade beat-'em-up, and admittedly I found some enjoyment in *Virtual Bart*) and a whole lotta misses (*Simpsons: Bart's Nightmare, Itchy and Scratchy, Simpsons Bowling*, et al.). So does Fox's upcoming *The Simpsons Wrestling* fall into the former category or the latter? Well, it's still too early to tell.

In the version we played, the graphics look intact, but the speech and sound effects are all placeholder. The voices/taunts in our rev were done by members of Big Ape, and they're hilarious. Hopefully, they'll be accessible by a code in the final game.

Considering this is a *Simpsons* fighting game, sound is a crucial aspect. Hearing Mr. Burns' oozing voice or Krusty's annoying laugh will do much to bring the Springfield experience home. In the next version, we're expecting all the voices (recorded by the actual actors from the show) and sound effects to be implemented. Most of the character models are already complete and playable: the usual suspects (Homer, Marge, Bart, and Lisa) are joined by a motley crew of Springfield regulars (Krusty, Willie, Moe, Apu, Flanders, and Barney) along with some oddball folks (Bumblebee Man, Professor Frink, and more). There's a total of 22 characters planned, and Big Ape's got most of the bases covered, although I find the exclusion of Milhouse and Nelson a felony in game design. The character models look great (wait till you see Kang, the green alien who cooks humans), but the animation could use a little tweaking.

There's also some clipping issues with limbs unnaturally poking through bodies in ways they didn't during the show, but there's plenty of time for that to be fixed before November. Hopefully, more depth will be added to the gameplay as well. Right now, there's a button for punching/combos, jumping, grappling, projectile throwing, and super combos. Everybody's got their own signature items which they hurl: Homer's got the bowling ball, Moe's got the Flaming Moe's, and Marge throws Maggie (who latches onto the opponent and starts suckling?). Fortunately, this game's got personality and humor in droves—Ned Flanders uses a cross and prayer (divine intervention, apparently) for two of his attacks. Super combos happen when your meter fills, and they're a wild barrage of moves that pack maximum damage (Apu's Kwik-E Mart-fu has to be seen to be believed). Give it a few months, a bunch of tweaks, and some added gameplay depth, and *Simpsons Wrestling* could score one for the good guys (i.e., a good *Simpsons* game)... or not. D'oh! E





Developer - Big Ape	1-2 Players	Eggo: Can you smell
Publisher - Fox Interactive	Available Nov	what the Apu is cookin'?

P PREVIEW









Dynasty Warriors 2

In *Kessen*, you were put at the head of a massive army, locked in conflict over the unification of a kingdom, leading your men onto the battlefield, only to return in glorious victory, or bloodied in ignominious defeat. *Kessen* was the stuff that epics are made of; the video game incarnation of Akira Kurosawa's "Ran." Now Koei brings us *Dynasty Warriors 2*, which takes you to the heart of a conflict, playing a sole warrior amidst a giant war. Instead of strategic guile, you will need to rely on your tempered steel blade and your right arm's tendons.

"Right arm's tendons?" you ask. "What on Earth do you mean by that?" I say this because this game is carpal tunnel-inducing, button-mashing mayhem. You will hack and slash through so many enemies that you will think you're in a Rambo movie. On the first level alone, I amassed a deliciously high body count of 600! That's right, 600 ancient warriors were cleaved to death by my battle-axe-wielding bad-ass.

The PS2 launch landscape is pretty bleak so it should be of no surprise that a game of this kind of frenetic action would be of major interest in our offices. The graphics are quite stunning, the game control is absolutely perfect and there is almost no slow down. The slow down is the most impressive actually, because there are hundreds of soldiers running around at any given time, with you right in the middle swinging madly. Even more taxing is the addition of some nifty lighting effects that should bog down the game, but don't. At no point during the action did the game's frame rate ever falter. It did, however slow considerably a couple of times as I ran from one hot spot to another. Whether this is something that will be resolved before the game goes final is another question (but this version is essentially final, save the implementation of the English text, so I am going to assume that some slow down will be there).







The gameplay is about as straightforward as you will ever see: Run from one hot spot to another and just start swinging. While you play a lone soldier, there is an entire battle taking place, in real time, around you. Off in every direction a skirmish is taking place between your liege's troops and the enemy's. Your mission is to make sure that the tides do not turn against your army. As you are cutting a swath through the hapless soldiers of the opposing army, messages will appear at the bottom of your screen, either instructing you to take the fight to another area or to return to a certain spot to help out. Boiled down, *Dynasty Warriors 2* is a beat-'em-up with objectives.



PREVIEW	THE JUDGE: *KESSEN* CON CARNAGE?	DEVELOPER - KOEI	1 PLAYER
		PUBLISHER - KOEI	AVAILABLE 4TH QTR











There are a total of nine different warriors to select for battle. There are three traits that each have to varying levels: health, attack and defense. You've got fighters with giant maces and battle axes, dual short swords and daggers, and pikes and staves.

This game, while visually stunning and viscerally satisfying, still is not without some weak areas. Totally annihilating your foes and racking up a huge body count is always enjoyable, but it can also get repetitive. Nothing can be more disheartening than grinding through 600 kills to get to the end, only to have some character you need to keep alive, die, forcing you to have to start all over again. Ugh. This all but final version, however, is without English text, so many of the objectives are lost to me and may add that all important depth that *DW2* is lacking. With the English in place in our next build it will be possible to determine whether or not *Dynasty Warriors 2* is the hyper-action game with the gameplay we crave or just a shallow hack-and-slash that will run out of steam the second the novelty of mass killing wears off. Keep your fingers crossed.







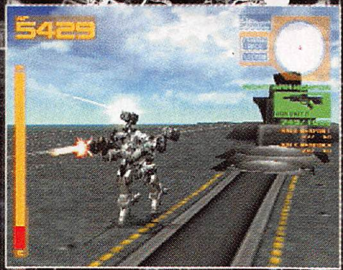




ARMORED CORE 2







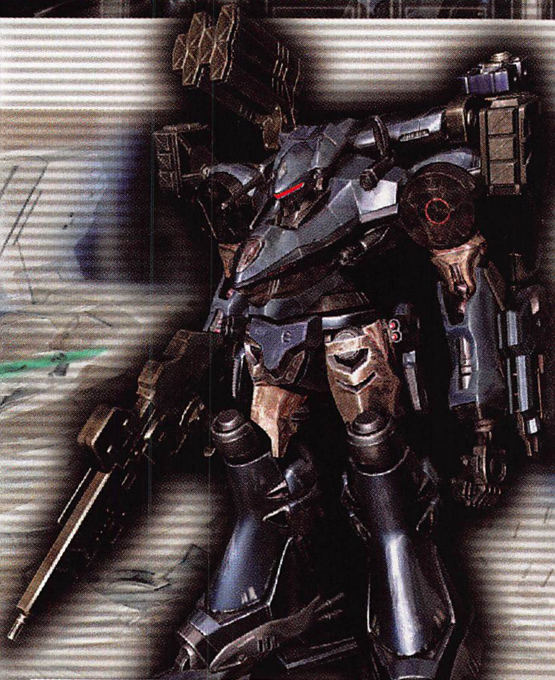
The perfect combination is vital in games, especially considering that almost every idea that can be done has already been done. Unless you've got that rare combination of a totally new genre and unique game play, you better take a few stellar ideas and mix them together. Well, if the preview version of *Armored Core 2* is anything to go by, Agetec might just wind up with something that's greater than the some of its collective parts.

The game is exclusively mech based (oversized pilot-driven robots to the uninitiated) combat, which has a great foundation. Masaharu Kawamori, who is known for his amazing work on the "Super Dimensional Space Fortress," has done the designs and they look miles beyond PS versions of the game. Of course, a graphical upgrade is expected (especially when Sony hypes the PS2 so), but each mech has multiple customizable features, such as body, weapons and internal components. The intricate design of the mechs is only outdone by your willingness to mix and match parts with colored patterns, which will reach into the billions of combinations.

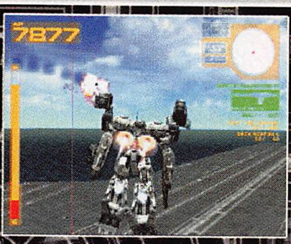
Gameplay wise, the combination is *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram* and *Front Mission 3*, with the fast, close quarter action of the former and the massive customization of the latter in place. At the beginning of the game, you must align yourself with one of three corporations, which are all vying for control of Mars in the distant future. Beginning as a mere soldier, you must move through various objective-based missions and join the elite fighters known as Ravens. Eventually, if you prove worthy enough, the highest rank of Nine Breaker can be attained.

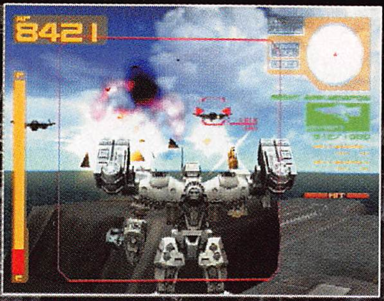
Thankfully, *AC2* won't be limited to single player missions, as you can go at it melee style against computer or human opponent. The 2-player mode will be split screen, but you can actually use the upcoming 'firewire' link and play full screen via 2 PS2's (just as *Wipeout XL* and *Ridge Racer Revolution* did on the original PS).

But all the options in the world aren't going to matter if the camera system is faulty. Who wants to play a sweet looking game where you can't see what's going on? At this stage of development, that's the only criticism that I have, as the fixed 'quarterback' view often obscures enemies or incoming projectiles. Using the start button actually locks the camera in one place, making it very easy to wander to one side and totally disappear from view. Throw in another camera view, Agetec, and you just might give PS2 owners the first great mech game. K













PREVIEW

KODOMO: Think I could get a million hits like Walter?	Developer - From Software Publisher - Agetec	1-2 Players Available Fall

SILENT SCOPE™

"Do you see the beast?", Fury asks as I zoom in on my target, rapidly reaching the point where I can see his eyes.

"Clear enough, Fury. This should present no significant problems...", and with that, I squeeze the trigger and an unsuspecting terrorist 3 buildings away suddenly develops a third nostril. Content in my silent ways, it's on to the next impending cadaver.

If you didn't get a chance to play *Silent Scope* in the arcades, you missed out on quite an experience. Konami went all out, releasing a cabinet that featured a full-sized replica of a sniper rifle, complete with a miniature screen to show zoomed-in areas. With the skilled use of this gun, an army of terrorists were transformed into target dummies en masse. Problem is, arcade games that rely on extensive perhiperhals don't really translate too well. While *VOOT* and *Samba De Amigo* are decent stand-alone, they only reach the heights of immersion with the *VOOT* Sticks and Maracas. Sadly, the chance of Konami releasing a sniper rifle on par with the arcade's *Silent Scope* rifle is slim to none and slim just died of anorexia.

So, the only question that remains is: Can a faithful translation be made *without* the gun? Well, Konami thinks so and the advanced preview version of PS2 SS comes closer to replicating that 'arcade feel' than I thought possible. The default setting always has a zoomed in scope, superimposed on the normal screen. You can adjust both opacity and size rapidly with the d-pad, and, when holding down the L trigger, remove the zoomed-in view for a totally clear look at all the action. The analog control of the crosshairs is surprisingly good and, given the myriad of customizable options, allows most gamers to find a happy medium.

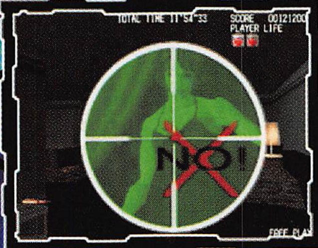
The mission is simple: Thanks to the bumbling actions of a President (how often do you hear that one?), he and his family have been taken hostage by terrorists. Shoot the terrorists, through various levels, killing bosses (which can be taken out by the skilled with a single, exceptional shot) and save the first family. Multiple branches ensure that the replay value is there, but how well will a pure quarter cruncher translate to the console market? Well, Konami's holding all the cards and we'll know for sure during the PS2's pending American launch. K

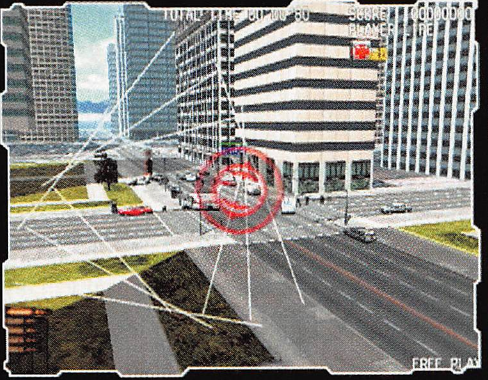










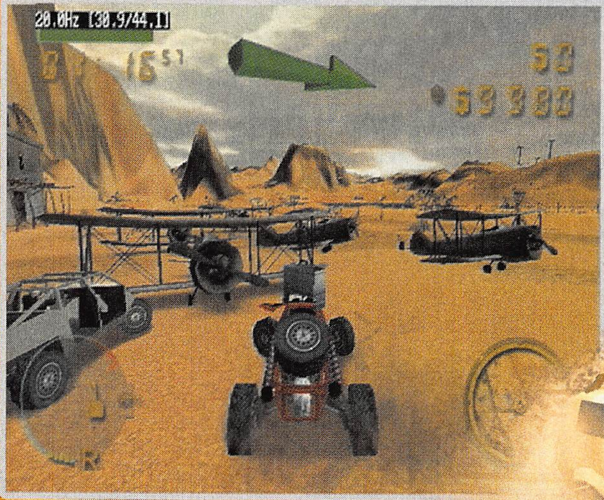




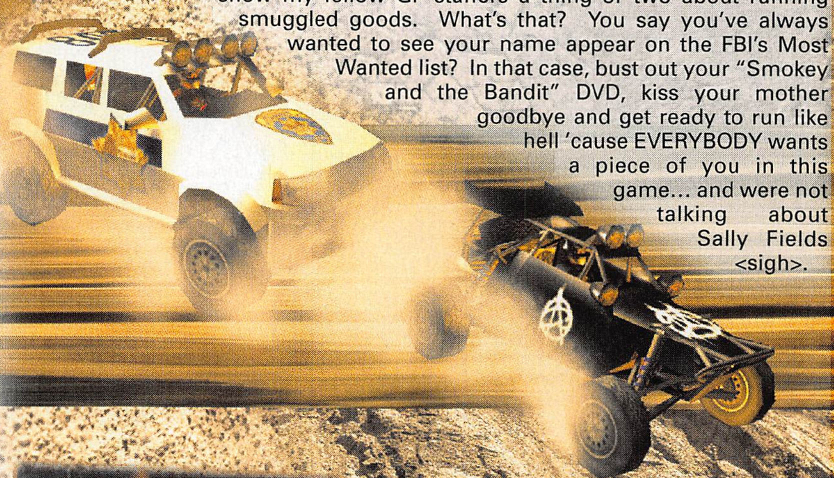
DEVELOPER - KONAMI	1 PLAYER	KODOMO: FOR A SAUSAGE,	P PREVIEW
PUBLISHER - KONAMI	AVAILABLE OCT 26	I'M AN EVIL SHOT!	



SMUGGLER'S RUN



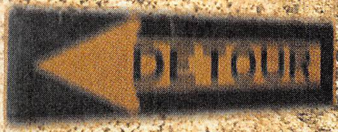
Having spent many a summer at sleep-away camp and later being shipped off to prison (err sorry, boarding school), I have come to know and respect firsthand the art of hiding contraband. From candy bars stuffed within the innards of teddy bears to Victoria's Secret catalogs hidden deep inside the pages of Mad Magazine (ever wonder why Alfred E. Neuman is always smiling), I've spent many years of my youth completely fooling authority figures (heck, I even landed a job at GameFan). So when Rockstar Games stopped by our office with their latest PS2 title, *Smuggler's Run*, I figured it was due time to relive a few memories of old and show my fellow GF staffers a thing or two about running smuggled goods. What's that? You say you've always wanted to see your name appear on the FBI's Most Wanted list? In that case, bust out your "Smokey and the Bandit" DVD, kiss your mother goodbye and get ready to run like hell 'cause EVERYBODY wants a piece of you in this game... and were not talking about Sally Fields <sigh>.



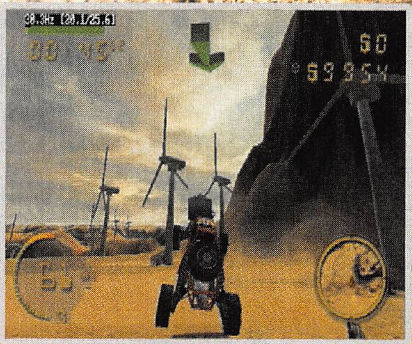
With ONI stealing much of the fanfare from Rockstar's other games, I was curious how they'd go about creating a similar "buzz" for a game that, in all honesty, is not so complex... or is it? Wait till you see the size of these environments!

Remember when *Mario 64* first came out and gamers were marveling at the fact that you could actually approach locations in the far distance. While a vast field of view is commonplace for most titles these days, it generally is not possible without tremendous draw in. Luckily for us, Angel Studios seems ready to push that envelope and has personally taken on the challenge of crafting enormous environments without any traces ugly pop up. And while *Smugglers Run* isn't quite the most impressive PS2 title visually, what it accomplishes in delivering a **SOLID**, Texas-sized virtual landscape is truly startling!

Ok, so the levels are ridiculous in size and you can see forever in the distance... how does it play?







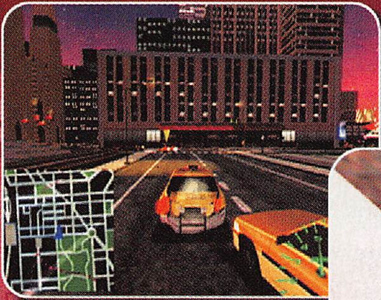


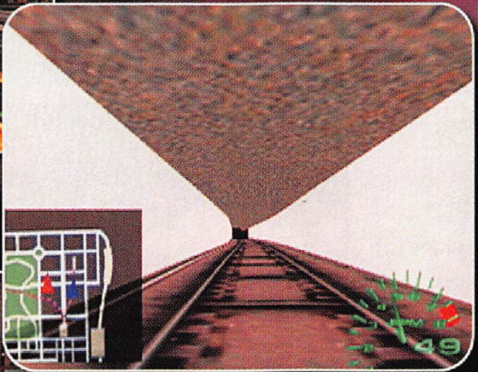


Basically, *Smuggler's Run* is the video game version of "Smokey and the Bandit." Picking one of 35 selectable vehicles, your mission is to collect contraband (highlighted by red smoke signals) and high-tail it to the nearest drop off point. Local authorities and rival gangs will make traversing the countryside a challenge, but the real meat is taking your car and pushing the laws of physics... Evel Knievel style. See a huge mountain... how about racing directly up the side (*Tony Hawk* ain't the only game where you can get vertical) and launching your car full speed off the base. Not only will all the levels encompass significant size, but will feature tons of objects to demolish (such as a harmless deer for instance) and locations in all sorts of conditions, from desert, snow and jungle environments.

With the environment and physics engine in place, it appears the only thing left for Angel Studios to focus on is the small things'—namely, adding detail and new art work for the pickups (or contraband). So until a final rev rolls onto my desk, I'll be here trying to figure out ways to smuggle kindness and understanding into the GF office... that stuff has been banned from these parts for far too long! **F**

P PREVIEW	FURY: JUST LIKE WHEN MY DADDY USED TO BOOTLEG MOONSHINE...	DEVELOPER - ANGEL STUDIOS PUBLISHER - ROCKSTAR GAMES	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE OCT 26 (PS2 LAUNCH)









湾岸

MIDNIGHT CLUB

STREET RACING

Amid the sounds of ambulances, police helicopters and that crazy man who walks around and 'hoots' all the time, it's generally tough to catch a good night's sleep in turbulent Hollywood. My old habit of driving through the city at nighttime has sadly disappeared, due to the fact that I just can't walk to my car when the streetlights come on (Just how fast can a white man run carrying a cigarette and a can of Red Bull?).

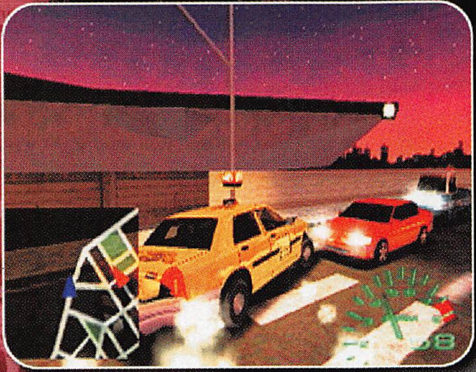
Well, Rockstar Games might have just the ticket, come fall on the PS2. How does driving around a fully 3D Manhattan sound? Got time to zip through Central Park, head past the U.S.S. Intrepid and scare the pedestrians off of Wall Street. Or maybe greater London is your calling, where circular streets intersect the river Thames and the cars drive on the wrong side of the road?

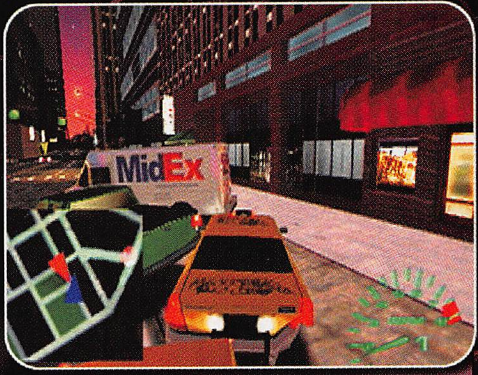
Midnight Club for PS2 will have both of those cities, rendered to amazing detail. With realistic locals, cars and people (although, ECM has rightfully pointed out that the New Yorkers won't actually run out into the street and beat you up...), you can explore every nook and cranny of the cities. Head down through the New York Subway system or 'round Buckingham Palace and go for speed.

The game is broken into several aspects, allowing for a single player career mode (affectionately known as "pimpin' it") or straight up arcade action. The career puts you though various hoops (follow this hookman here, race across town hitting certain points) and allows you to access new cars. Arcade, which can be 1 or 2 players, gives you the simple options of exploring the town, head to head attack, capture the flag and waypoint. With a multitude of cars under your control (such as a cab, low rider or pseudo-Italian racer), the replay value promises to be high.

Right now, only a few scant problems plague the game. The frame rate dips, from a constant above 30, to something much worse when many cars get on the screen at any one time. This might simply be a number crunching trade off, as the environments are **massive**, but establishing a constant rate would help things greatly. Other than that, the cars aren't quite up in the polygons, but considering that the game is actually very early, Rockstar should have time to clean things up a bit. Expect nothing short of a full scale New York and London racing fest on your PS2 come 4th quarter. **K**







DEVELOPER - ANGEL STUDIOS	1 PLAYER	KODOMO: BETTER THAN	P PREVIEW
PUBLISHER - ROCKSTAR	AVAILABLE OCT 26	THE MILE HIGH CLUB?	

COMING SOON

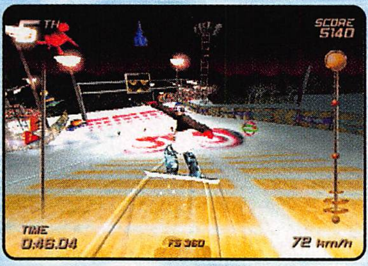
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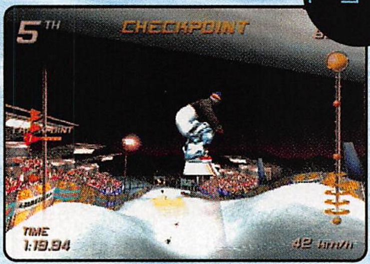
PS2

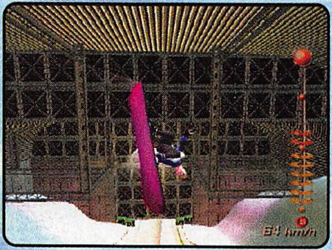
Snowboard Supercross

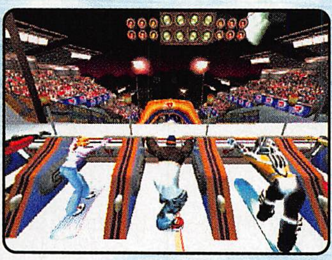
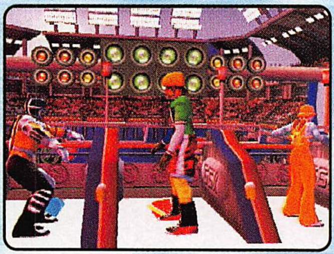
Developer	Publisher
EA Canada	**EA**

EA's first foray into the world of Snowboarding is almost done, and promises to capture the full experience (sans broken bones) fully. You also get levels that are much longer and more detailed than any snowboarder yet.







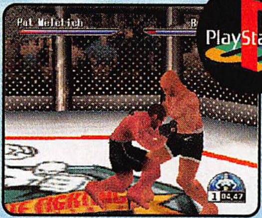
PlayStation

Ultimate Fighting Championship

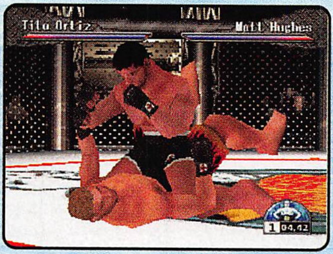
Developer	Publisher
Opus	**Crave**

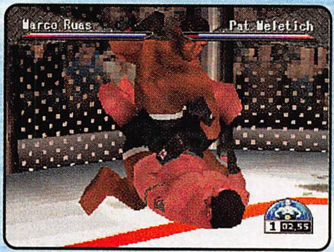
Take fighting, grappling and good old fashioned brawling, and you've got the premier genre-busting game for the PS. *UFC* is both unique and fun, and looks to take fighting games to the inevitable next level.







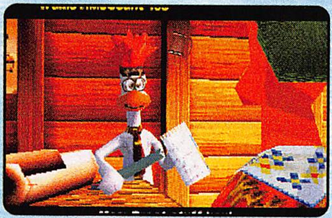
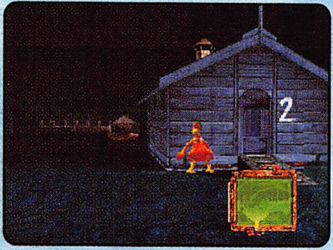


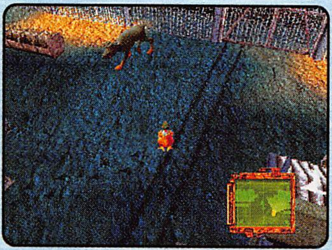
PlayStation

Chicken Run

Developer	Publisher
Blitz	**Eidos**

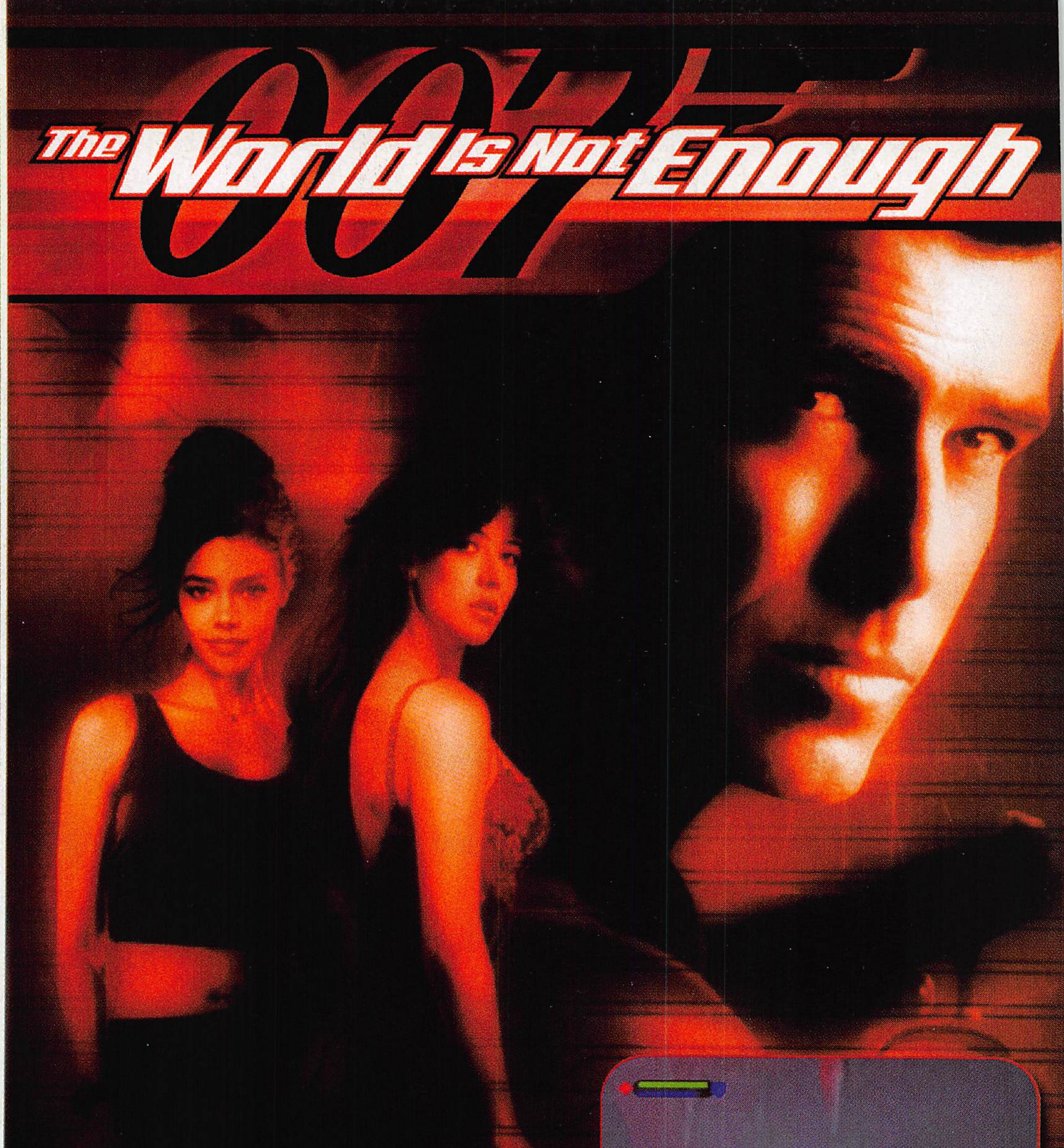
You've seen the movie and will soon get a chance to play as the chickens, as they attempt to excape the farm, which will someday turn them into food. It's wacky, comical and true to the movie roots, while bringing action based fun to the PS.




YOU DEFEND YOUR FAMILY.
YOU DEFEND YOUR HOMELAND.
YOU DEFEND ALL THAT IS GOOD.
BUT FIRST, YOU MUST DEFEND YOURSELF.
TEEN
Animated Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
PlayStation
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007 The World Is Not Enough



When Rare announced that *Perfect Dark* would be the successor to *Goldeneye*, I pretty much figured the 007 license was doomed on N64. Images of a horrific 64-bit Bond game filled my head... I couldn't help but to think back to Ocean's *Mission: Impossible*. Was my beloved Bond about to join Ethan Hawk in the land of mediocre game design? And then the kicker, gaming behemoth Electronic Arts was now at the helm. Nothing personal towards EA, but when you're a HUGE publisher known for gobbling up franchises like it's 29-cent hamburger day at McDonalds, certain games do tend to get the fast food treatment. I'm not going to cite any examples here, but lets just say they tainted the *Ultima* license (hey, did I let that one slip?). And of course, there is the fact that the N64 hardware is showing its age like never before. How in the world was Bond going to make his cartridge comeback facing all of these obstacles? Oh, and did I mention that "The World Is Not Enough" was the biggest pile of crap 007 film I had ever seen. Let's just say EA was up against an enemy viler than Dr. No, more frightening than Jaws and even as ruthless as Goldfinger himself—three years of hardened expectations.









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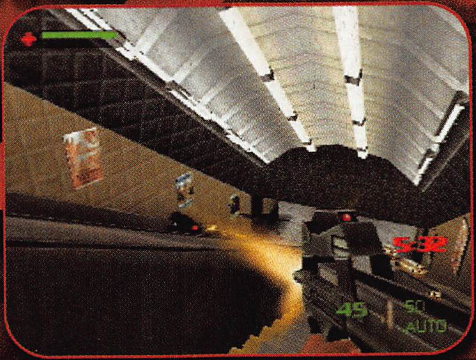
Ever seen "The Exorcist"? I swear, after powering up *TWINE* and stepping back into the role of Britain's premiere spy and sniper extraordinare, I did a double take so severe that it would have even put Linda Blair out of work (assuming she actually had a job, of course). Somehow EA did the near-impossible and crafted an awesome Bond sequel... a cart that not only showcases some of the N64's best graphics, but a set of play mechanics that even the folks at Rare would be impressed by (and don't tell me you ever imagined this one would ever hold a candle to *Goldeneye*). To make a long story short, *TWINE* plays **identical** to Rare's Bond and after spending a near eternity on the N64's best-seller list, it's a winning formula that any developer would be proud to mimic.





Now, I don't know about you, but playing a multiplayer game on a split screen has gotten kind of old for me. A few summers ago I didn't quite mind so much battling it out in a 13-inch box (you know the drill—4 players, all rocket launchers, me receiving the Most Cowardly award) but these days I rely on juicy story modes to hold my interest. And like in *Perfect Dark* and *GoldenEye*, this is truly where *TWINE* thrives. While our preview copy is still a bit buggy (how come when I enable the all weapons, full gadgets, level select and god mode at the same time the game freaks out?) the story missions seem extremely refined. Obviously they follow the film's premise, but since I despise the movie I tend to skip the cinemas... just point me in the direction of some gun-toting terrorists and witness the carnage. And what better way to win one for the Queen than with a brilliant "Matrix"-style arsenal at hand. 40 devastating Q Lab weapons and gadgets will appear in the final including enough variety of rocket launchers (complete with killer particle effect explosions), grenades, automatics and sniper rifles to impress even an ATF officer. Oh, and for all you *GoldenEye* purists out there, the developers even managed to fit in a lovely train car sequence among the game's 20 levels. Hey, anything for the fans, right?

For a game that I was certain I'd hate, I now find myself eating those words with some nice fava beans on the side. How EA pulled off injecting *TWINE* with the type of quality you'd expect from a first party N64 game is beyond me, but I'm definitely not complaining. My friends... Bond is back! **F**



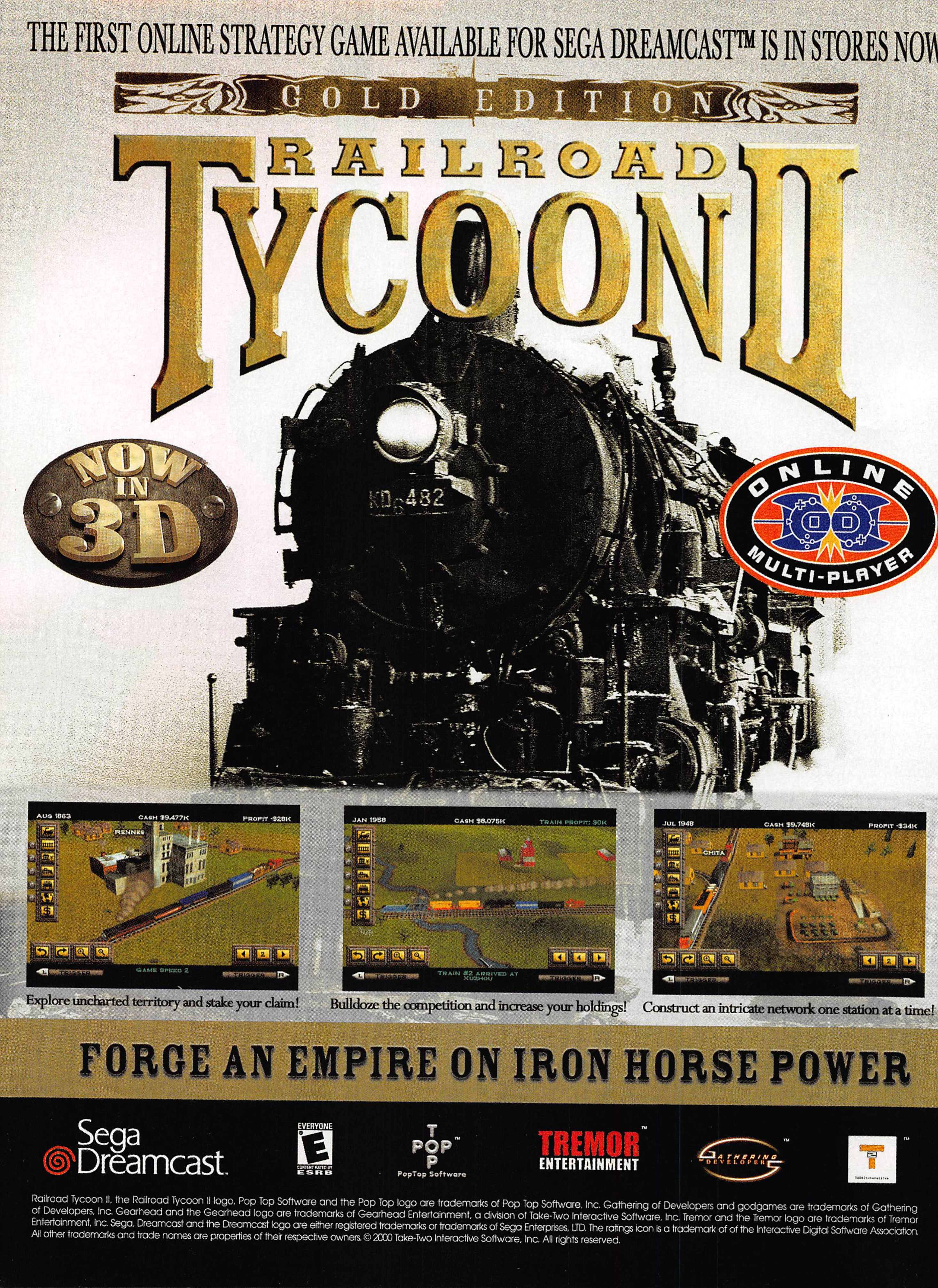






DEVELOPER - EUROCOM	1-4 PLAYERS	FURY: VIRTUAL DENISE
PUBLISHER - EA	AVAILABLE 4TH QTR	RICHARDS? HIDE YOUR CHILDREN.

P PREVIEW


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MEGA MAN 64

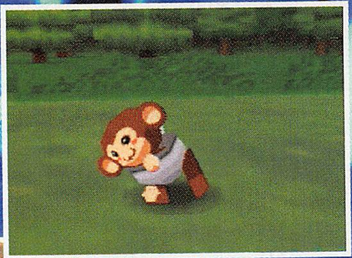
Sitting before me, nestled ever so snugly in my aging N64 is a copy of *Mega Man 64* (a.k.a. *Mega Man Legends* on PlayStation)—a game that a year ago, I would have sworn to the heavens above (or Data the Capcom monkey) would never see the light of day on the Fun Machine. That's right, I haven't had much faith in Nintendo's third party support for quite some time. But now, everything's about to change... The Dream Team is about to be reborn. Nintendo and Capcom are joining forces to bring updates to all the classics—*Metroid, Kid Icarus, Final Fight, and Bionic Commando.* And did I mention they're all 2D?

All right, so maybe that's the world I wished I lived in (ECM's Note: anybody else think Fury needs to get his own schtick?). Can you really blame me? Most of the noteworthy games on N64 have been the result of some Rare craftsmanship. And now, after years of near silence (hmm, who needs *Street Fighter*? N64 owners want *Mickey's Tetris*), Capcom is ready to step up to the plate with... another port? I knew there had to be a catch.















Even though I was completely impressed with the N64 version of *Resident Evil 2* (thank you, Angel Studios), I still clung to the hope that Capcom would deliver something a tad more original in their third 64-bit installment (something more like *RE: Zero* for instance). Alas, while a 3D *Mega Man* title wasn't exactly what I had in mind (can you imagine the *Yoshi's Story* engine powering a 2D *Mega Man* game?!), I'm definitely not going to complain. Besides, I already beat *Perfect Dark*... what else am I going to play?

So if you're sitting there wondering just what juicy additions are going to adorn the Nintendo version of *MM Legends*, let me diffuse those lofty hopes right now. From what I've played, *MM64* mimics the PlayStation game to a tee, graphics and all. Some would say this is a good thing, considering *Legends* was a darn good game in the first place, but it's also unfortunate because the N64 version **should** provide the better-looking package.

If Capcom actually spent the time to up the polygon count (as stated in its press release), then perhaps I'd view this port a little differently. But for now, I'm left with that horrible feeling of 'been there done that.' I mean, if the PS can get Mega Man in nearly every way, shape and form, why can't Nintendo loyalists? Or perhaps, Capcom's just saving Rockman's real adventure for a li'l somethin' called Dolphin... man, I only wish! **F**







DEVELOPER - CAPCOM	1 PLAYER	EGGO: BETTER LATE
PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	AVAILABLE NOV	THAN NEVER... I GUESS.

P PREVIEW

COMING SOON

COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON

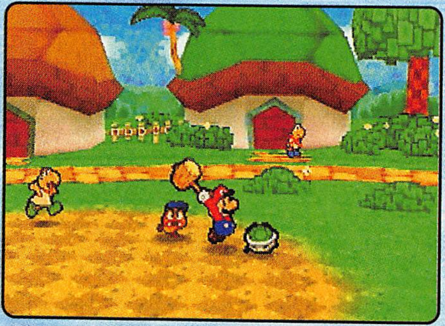
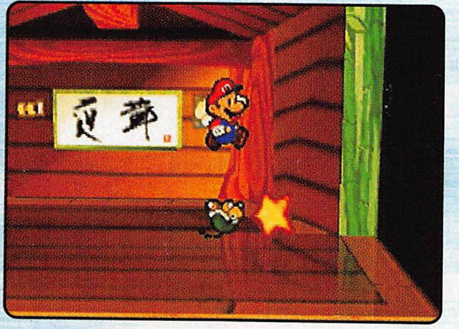
NINTENDO 64

Paper Mario

Developer	Publisher
Intelligent Systems	**Nintendo**

The name may not sound familiar, but this is the sequel to *Super Mario RPG*. It's really unusual to see sprites on the N64, so *Paper Mario* has a style all its own. 2D goodness on the fun machine? You know we're all over it.



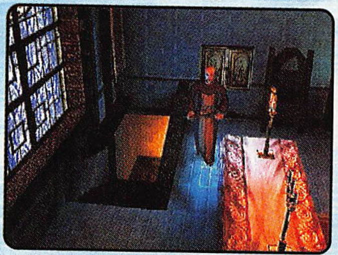



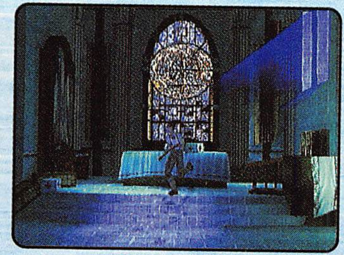
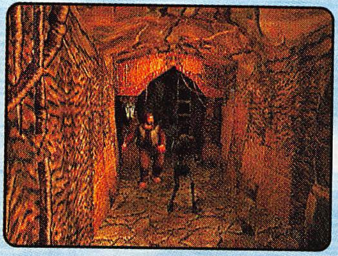



Eternal Darkness

Developer	Publisher
Silicon Knights	**Nintendo**

Is Capcom the only one company who can do survival horror on the N64? We'll see as Nintendo gives us its own take on the genre, courtesy of Silicon Knights, the creators of *Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen*. This game is like a horror book come to life in your living room. Yet another quality title from the Big N to look forward to, though it's been delayed till 2001...

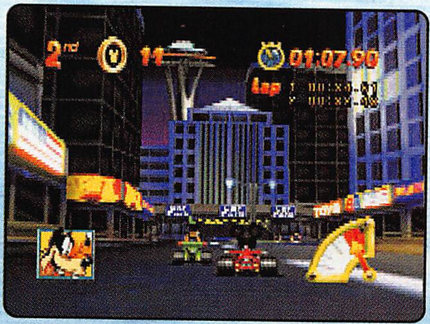


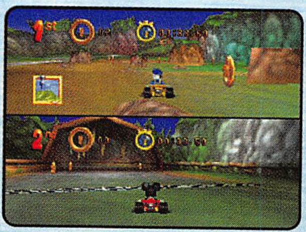



Mickey's Speedway

Developer	Publisher
Rare	**Nintendo**

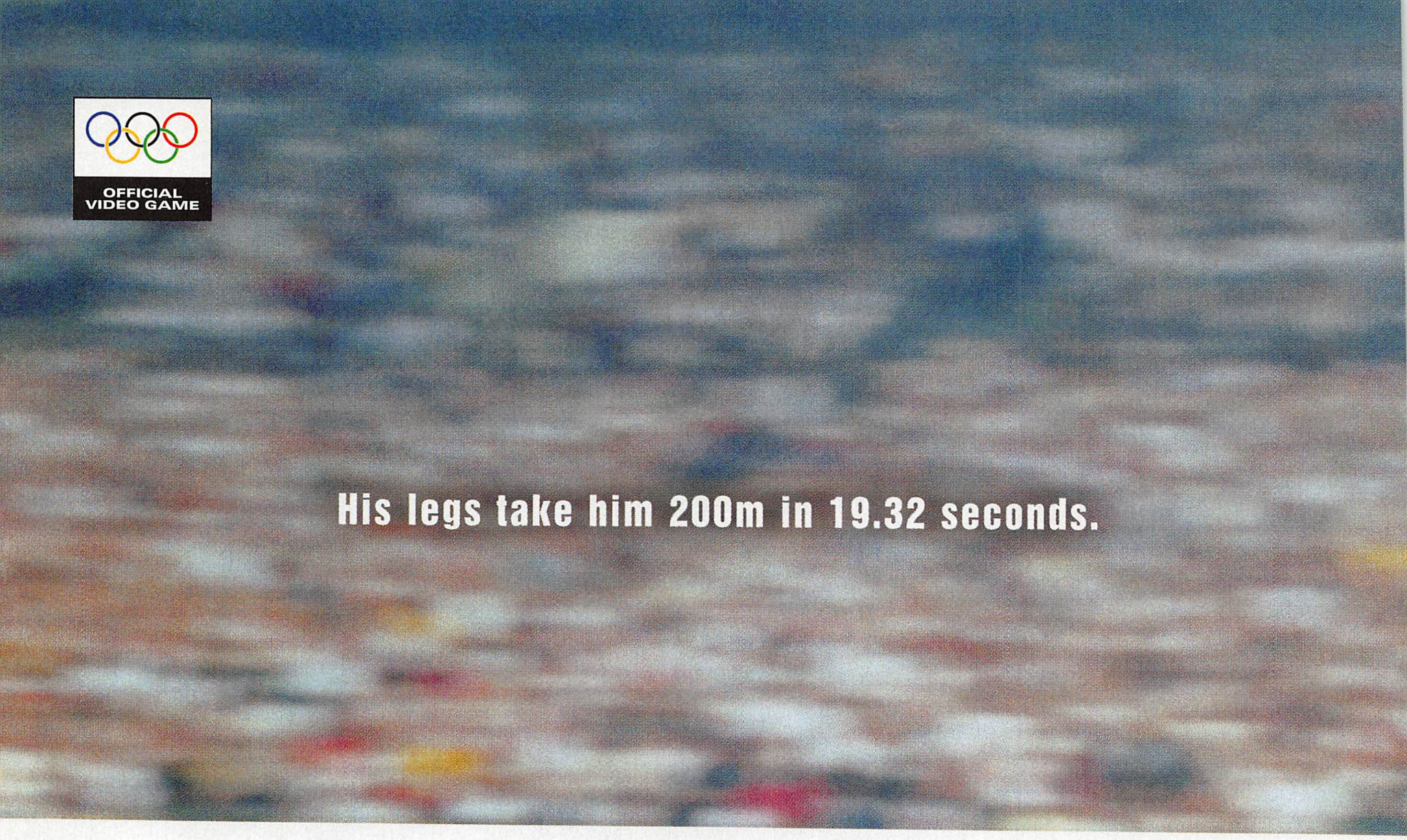
Okay, how's this for a topnotch combination: Rare working on a kart racing game with the biggest names in the Disney world. With Rare's talent for redefining genres and taking games to the next level, you know that the N64 has still got some legs. And yet, can even the almighty Rare unseat Mario and Crash as kings of kart racing? We shall see...





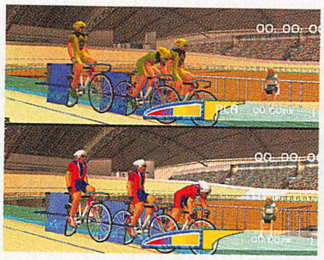


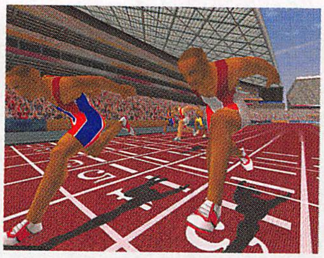

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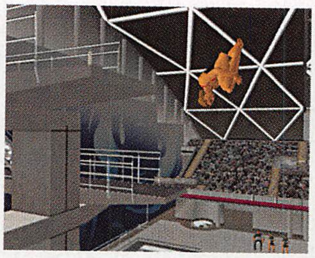


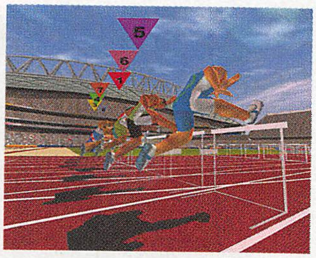
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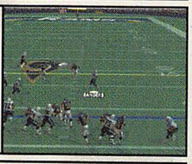
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GameFan Sports

NFL QB Club 2001
Dreamcast
Acclaim



This series has been hovering around mediocrity for years and the 2001 Dreamcast version is no better. QBC is a totally average football sim that offers better graphics and sound than the PlayStation or N64 can provide, but little else. No competition for *NFL 2K1*.

G 7 C 6 P 6 M 6 O 5 **69**

Idle sports fans will get a kick out of Acclaim's attempt to compete with *NFK2K1*. While solid in all areas though, it still has a couple of annoying gameplay glitches and lacks the same knowledge of the game that *Madden* and *NFL2K1* have.

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 5 O 5 **71**

Madden 2001
PlayStation
EA Sports



While not as impressive an outing as the N64 version, *Madden 2001* nonetheless has all of the fixin's for a solid football sim. This franchise has definitely leveled off and offers little to no more in the gameplay department than its predecessors and competition.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 5 **85**

This is the football game I will be playing on the PlayStation... that is, if I ever play a football game on the PlayStation again. A great sim, *Madden* is still just another installment into a stagnating series that will get new life shortly on the PS2.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 4 **84**

Madden 2001
Nintendo 64
EA Sports



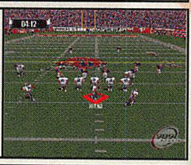
Wow, is all I can say. The first thing you will notice when playing this game is how incredibly fast it is. Even better is the solid gameplay and beautiful graphics. Without a doubt, the best N64 football title to date. Oh how I yearn for the PS2 version...

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 5 **89**

If you own an N64, this is a must. Finally there is a football game on the Mario machine that brings together all of the elements that make football video games great. Great fun to play and very easy on the eyes. You'd think Iguana was responsible for the graphics.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 6 **91**

NFL GameDay 2001
PlayStation
SCEA



While this series has bounced back, it still has the unmistakeable smell of stagnation. Like *Madden*, let's hope this franchise ends with this installment and finds new life on the PS2. For now, this should only be considered a time killer till then.

G 8 C 8 P 7 M 7 O 5 **84**

I was always more of a *GameDay* fan than *Madden*, much to El Niño's chagrin. *GameDay* has never done me wrong, but I most concur that it is a dead horse on the PlayStation. When there is no more ground to break, it is time to move on...

G 8 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 5 **85**

NCAA GameBreaker 2001
PlayStation
SCEA

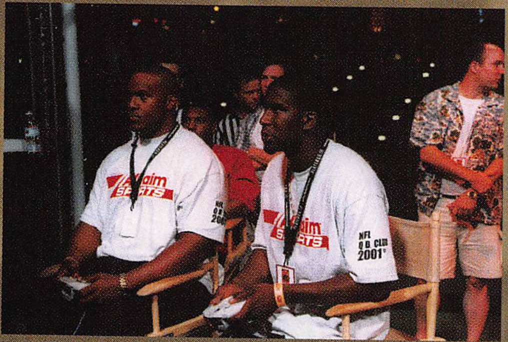


A facsimile in every respect to *GameDay*, *GameBreakers* is a good college sim that improves on the faltering franchise but does little to expand on it. Solid game, but no where near as good as rival *NCAA Football 2001*.

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 6 O 5 **84**

GameDay may be my pro game, but *GameBreakers* has sucked to me since it went 3D. Better than in the past, this college sim is a far cry from the brilliance that is *NCAA Football*. EA Sports owns the college scene.

G 6 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 5 **75**



Surf Riders
PlayStation
UbiSoft



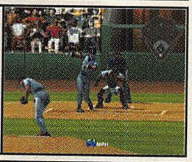
Tough scoring a game like this. *Surf Riders* is undeniably fun to play, offering good graphics, good control and some cool surfing moves. Only problem is that it is more shallow than a valley girl, relegating it to rental status (albeit maybe a repeat rental).

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 6 O 7 **74**

I was ready to write this game off when I first saw El Niño play. Then I got hooked and found myself tubing away, trying off the lips and floaters (not that I ever pulled off a floater. Not even sure if it is a trick in the game). Shallow, yes, but still fun.

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 8 **82**

WSB2K1
Dreamcast
Sega Sports



This will go down in history as the most disappointing baseball video game. You can't control your fielders, the batting interface sucks and the whole game it is totally devoid of fun. Anyone one who likes this game is either a total idiot or... well, a total idiot.

G 8 C 2 P 2 M 7 O 4 **49**

WSB2K1 takes this classic series straight from the all-star game way down to the minors. Sure the graphics are better than ever, but unresponsive gameplay (classic case of too much mo-cap) and no control over fielding result in a major league disappointment.

G 8 C 3 P 2 M 1 O 5 **54**

Action Bass
PlayStation
Take 2



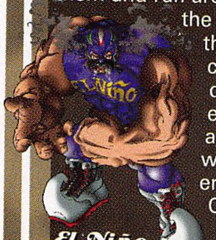
This entertaining little title is being released as a bargain product, being priced at $10 bucks. The funny thing is, that it is better than the majority of full priced fishing games on the market. Go figure. Fishing game fans will certainly want to check this game out.

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 6 O 6 **72**

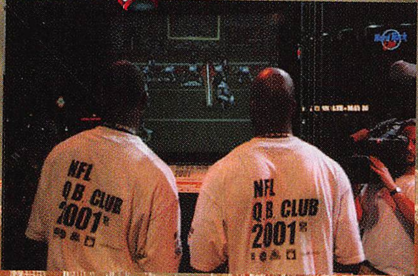
Well I am NOT into fishing games, so I found little to cheer about when confronted with this yawner. I'd say it was a destined-to-be bargain basement buy if not for the fact Take 2 already put it there. Timed mode is even worse than boring; it's tedious.

G 7 C 6 P 4 M 4 O 4 **59**

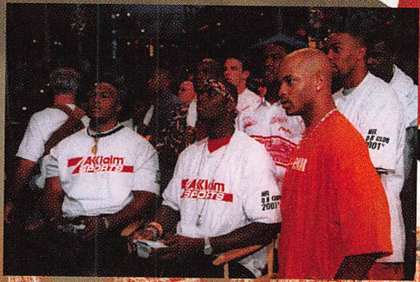
Recently yours truly got a chance to go with Acclaim to the sunny state of Florida to partake in the Acclaim Sports NFL Players Rookie Premiere event. Ok, maybe I didn't *partake* in the proceedings, but I did get too shmooze and booze with the guys, go to the Children's Hospital with them and run around Universal Studios. What was the event about, you ask? Well, two things, actually. For starters, it was a chance for the players be introduced to the NFL with their first ever trading cards. All of the big trading card companies were there, from Fleer to Pinnacle, meeting the guys and taking photos for their rookie's cards. The second activity was the Acclaim Sports Video Game Challenge, where all of the rookies faced off in a single elimination tourney in *NFL Quarterback Club 2001*. The top eight players then went to the second round which was televised outside in Universal Studios theme park. The winner was Corey Simon of the Eagles who walked away with $10,000. As if taking the NFL by storm wasn't enough, they've gotta muscle in on my territory and start earning money for playing games. A great time was had by all. **EN**



El Niño

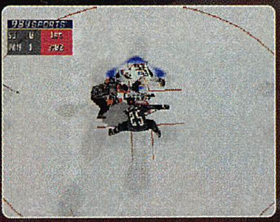




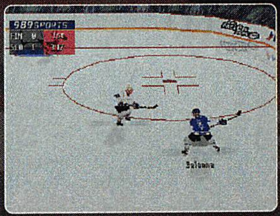


NHL FaceOff 2001

(Solworks/SCEA)

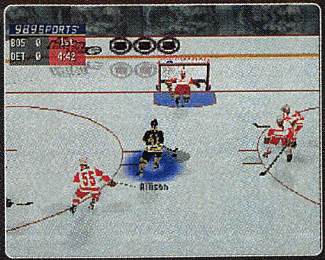


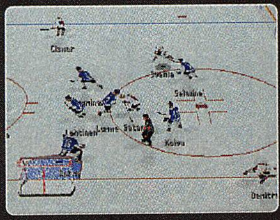
My pick for hockey game of the year in '99 is back and it is... well, actually, it isn't. As of right now much of what made *FaceOff 2000* the best out there seems to be absent. The game isn't as fast and the control is a little looser. My hope for an even more 16-bit experience is slowly being lost. But hey, there is still time, right? It will be a month or two before the game is finally ready and that should be plenty of time to work out the kinks!









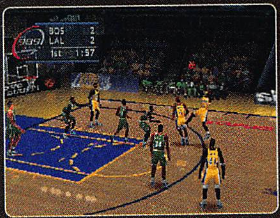


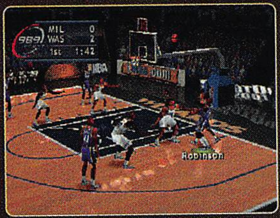
NBA ShootOut 2001

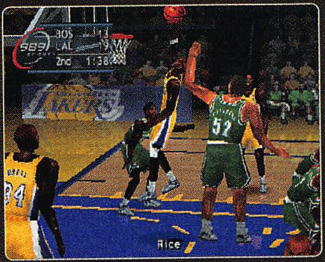
(KillerGame/SCEA)

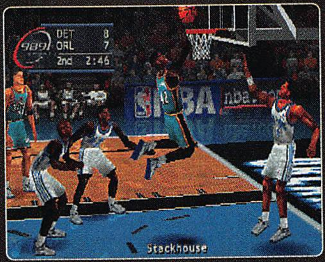


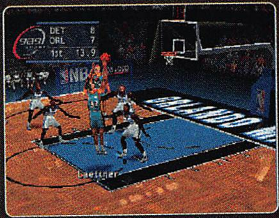
The return of Touch Shooting is here! *ShootOut 2001* is lookin' pretty good right now, boasting some nice poly models, good motion capture and solid offensive and defensive AI. Also fun to play around with is the create-a-dunk feature which gives you the tools you need to make your favorite Vince Carter jam (ok, so maybe not a Vince dunk). Looks as though the hoop wars my actually heat up here again between *ShootOut* and *Live*.











ESPN NBA Tonight

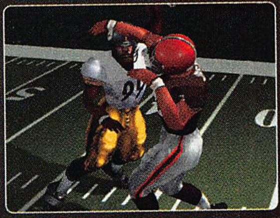
(Konami/Konami)

ESPN NFL Prime Time

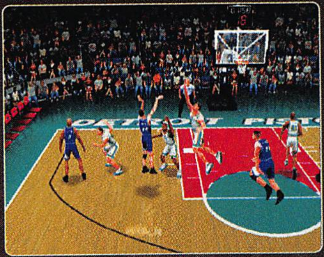
(Konami/Konami)

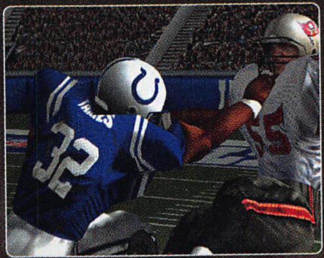


In their daunting quest to capture 50% of the world sports market, Konami is readying its first first batch of titles, including *NBA Tonight* and *NFL Primetime*. It's clear that these games look like a million bucks, but there are rumors they play more like a nickel. Basketball, for one, still has some major control problems. Let's hope that the developers can somehow infuse some good gameplay into these comely titles. I would venture a guess that they are better than *WSB2K1*, at least.



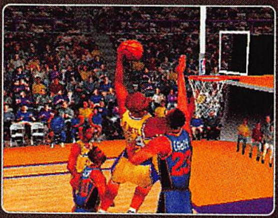




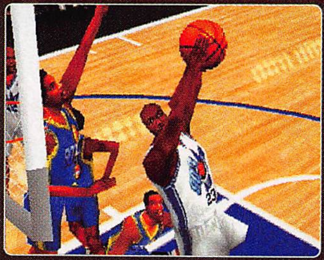
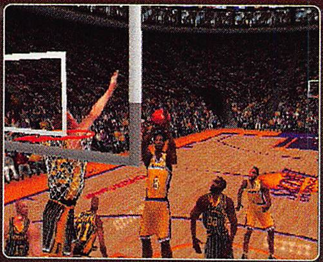


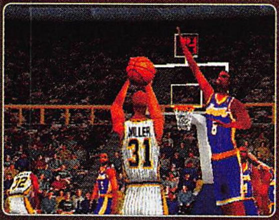


NBA Live 2001
(EA Canada/EA Sports)

You just know this game is gonna rock when it comes out. While, like all of the current PlayStation sports franchises, *Live* has hit the wall in terms of reinventing itself, *Live 2001* will still offer enough of what we love most to make it worth one last spin around the block. It can be hard concentrating on this game knowing what lies ahead, though. *NBA Live 2001* on the PS2 will hopefully be as slick a title as its PSX counterpart has been.



Moto GP
(Namco/Namco)

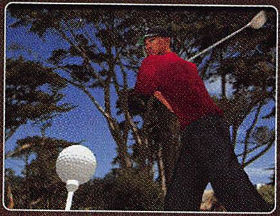



This could easily have gone in the front of the mag, but *Moto GP* is shaping up to be a pretty damn cool motorcycle racing sim. Right now *Moto GP* can flaunt its stellar graphics, superb physics model and great control. Only problem is that it is a bit stale and needs a little of that magic that can take a dry racing sim and give it the excitement and flair of a title like *Ridge Racer*. They get the fun factor down, though, and they are sitting on a scorcher of a game.

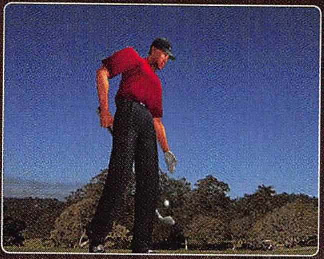
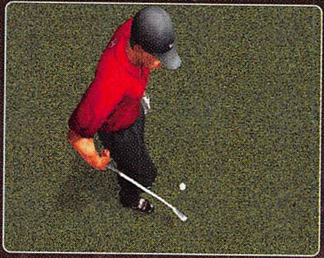
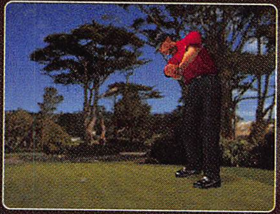
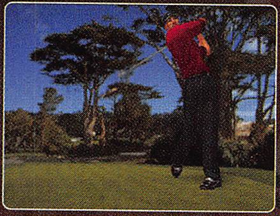





Tiger Woods Golf
(EA Sports/EA Sports)

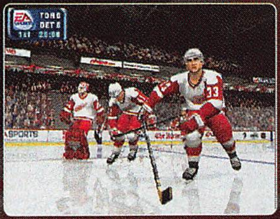
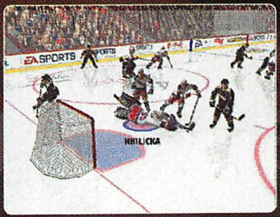



This game is still incredibly early, but nonetheless has me excited. Although golf games have the tendancy to glut console systems and lack anything resembling personality (even the last couple EA golf titles have sucked), *Tiger Woods Golf* for the PS2 may have what it takes to make it a must have... like *PGA European Tour* was, on the Genesis, those many years ago. How great would it be if you could do the ball juggling thing in this game?

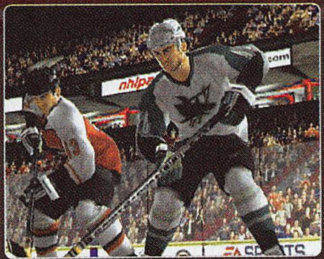





NHL 2001

(EA Sports/EA Sports)

The best EA Sports franchise with the most consistent product is making the jump to the next level and I, for one, am beside myself. After the disappointing *NHL2K*, on Dreamcast, all I have left to look forward to this winter is *NHL 2001*. Just think, all of the great gameplay, AI and features of the PlayStation version with the graphics capability of the PS2. Then again, I said the same thing about *WSB2K1*. Both possibilities make me shiver...



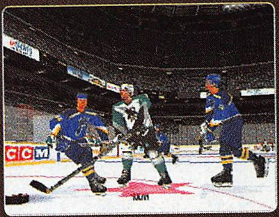
NHL 2001

(EA Sports/EA Sports)




For those of you that won't have a PlayStation 2 when it launches, there's always the fallback option: *NHL 2001* on PSX. Not too shabby considering that *NHL 2001* looks to be another brilliant hockey title from the hockey gods in Vancouver. While I picked *FaceOff* last year as the game to buy, I am leaning towards *NHL 2001*, this time around, with its enhanced graphics, better AI and pedigree (not to mention *FaceOff* looks a little off).

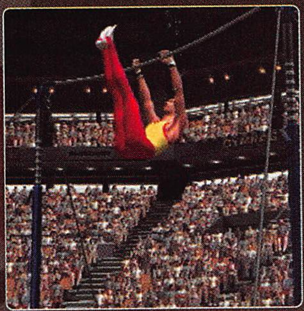


International Track & Field

(Konami/Konami)

No, there is nothing wrong with your copy of the mag... nor our screen grabbing equipment. PlayStation 2 is giving birth to the next annoying trend in game development: the motion blur. Like the lens flare on PlayStation, motion blur is being used to smooth out the animations of the characters to achieve a more fluid and lifelike effect. Bah, it is obnoxious and is already cropping up everywhere. Not the graphic dynamo of Konami's other PS2 sports titles, *International Track & Field* is nonetheless an impressive looking version of an age old classic.






EUROPA

I hope you like racing games, cause Europa's chock full 'o them this month with *Lotus Challenge* (PS), *F1 2000* (PS2), and the *Wipeout* only guys like Riot will get to play. To wrap it all up we take a quick look at *Sydney 2000*—Olympic-action coming soon to a console near you.

Alien Resurrection [PlayStation]

It's time for some new shots from Argonaut Software's much-delayed *Alien Resurrection* (the film came out when?!) which has gone from a 3rd person perspective to a FPS style blast-'em-up. Looks like a very smart change on Argonaut's part (a change no doubt inspired by the awesome PC game *Alien vs Predator* from fellow Brit developers Rebellion, which sadly is not making its way onto the consoles—would be a brilliant Dreamcast game, methinks).



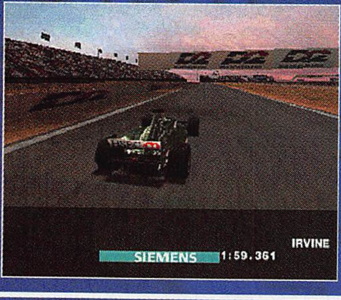


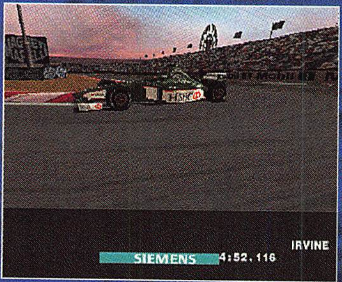

Psygnosis Formula One 2000 [PlayStation 2]

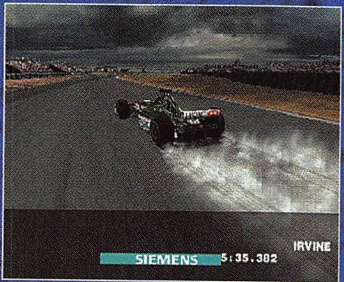
Studio 33 is working hard on a follow-up to its excellent (and million-selling) *F199*, which is now named *Formula One 2000* due to licensing issues with EA. The game is PlayStation 2-bound but that version is being handled in-house by Psygnosis Liverpool who are aiming to get the game out for the European launch of the PlayStation 2. However, the PlayStation incarnation is going to be out before that and will again feature commentary in six different languages and various improvements, especially in the 2-player mode. Studio 33 is including a 2-player split-screen Championship mode. Thus it's possible to race through an entire season with two players on different teams which hasn't been done before in any F1 games.

Technically, Psygnosis' game poos on EA's F1 game, best remembered for its wobbly cars and jerky framerate that destroyed any sense of speed. No such worries here as the early demo runs extremely smoothly with plenty of detail both in the cars and on the backgrounds. Of course you have all the real drivers here so you can drive my fellow countryman Mika Häkkinen.

Hmm... Talking about him, seems like he hasn't understood the pitlane mentality of dating amazing looking modelchicks... Oh, well...







Lotus Challenge [PlayStation 2]

Some of the Euro gaming aficionados out there might think that this is a follow-up to Magnetic Fields' and Shaun Southern's legendary *Lotus Turbo Challenge* Amiga games that appeared on the SNES as *Top Gear Racing* back in the Super NES days (with Kemco as the publisher), but the only thing in common with the Amiga game and the upcoming Kuju Entertainment-developed Playstation 2 *Lotus Challenge* is the name.

You'd be forgiven not knowing just who Kuju Entertainment are—that is until now: the small British development team that's mainly known for it's *Eagle One Harrier* game, which was done by its Glassghost division. Recently the company got into headlines as it revealed the impressive "Tau" X-Box demo it had done for Microsoft and the team is notching up a gear with its recently-announced *Lotus Challenge* title on Sony's revolutionary box of tricks.

Why Lotus then (err... Ferrari was taken?)? Well, besides having rather cool looking cars spanning many decades, the name is really well known and, since the company has produced all sorts of vehicles with motors (F1 cars, for example), Kuju can use those in its games too. In total, there will be 41 cars, with 5 of these being future concept cars designed by Lotus' own studios.

The cars are lovingly modeled with many using over 6000 polygons and tracks of over a quarter million of polygons. You can see that this is already a spectacular looking game. Some of the staggering expectations that we have from the Playstation 2 hardware are slowly but surely beginning to happen, as just witnessing the minute detail on the unfinished tracks is reassurance enough that with time, developers will be churning out some "next-level" visuals.

There is more to the game than just pure racing in the way of the Challenges (which the title, of course, reveals). There's going to be a rather dodgy sounding plot that will have the Lotus team completing various races but also do car stunts for movies and the occasional rescue mission... just image *Gran Turismo, Ridge Racer 5* and *Emergency Call Ambulance* mixed together... I wonder if the cars will get damaged, as car manufacturers are notoriously picky about their cars getting wrecked in games—as if that would somehow give us less incentive to buy a Lotus etc car.




It'll be interesting to see if Kuju will be going for realistic handling (which one would think Lotus would want) or simply offer a middle-of-the-road arcadey feel... What I do know is that with looking-better-each-month *GT2000* on the horizon, Kuju better make sure its Lotus game will offer some exhilarating gameplay—not just superb technology.

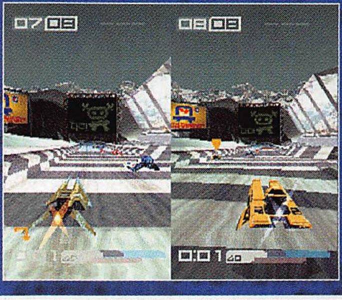


Wipeout Special Edition [PlayStation]

As mentioned a few months back, Psygnosis *Wipeout Special Edition* was released in July across European territories but the game is not going to see the light of the day in the USA, which is likely due to the lackluster sales of *Wipeout 3*. Here are some screenshots from the *Special Edition* which contains tracks from the previous three games and until-now-hidden prototype tracks running on the *Wipeout 3* engine.

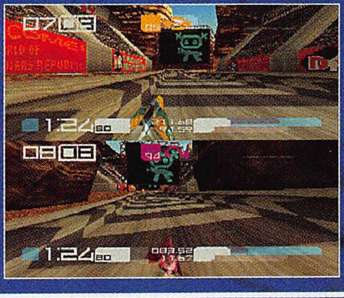












This is Football 2 [PlayStation]

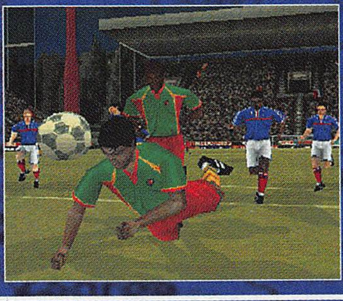
Considering how much money and effort Sony poured into it's mediocre soccer title *This is Football*, it's unsurprising that an update is in the works. It's a tough job with Konami raising the bar with each *ISS* (*MLS Game Night* in the US—go get it now!) release to seemingly unattainable heights for other developers, yet Sony's Soho team remains undeterred in its path to create a great soccer title.

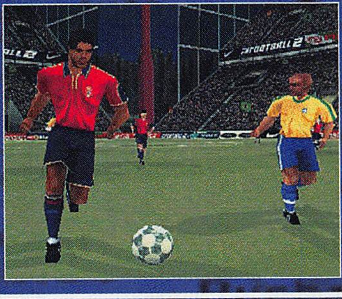


Last year's edition featured an impressive 3D engine with a solid 25fps update. However there were problems with the AI that notably always had the CPU teams trying to score in the exact same way no matter what team you were playing against. The passing system was also lacking, an unfortunate situation that made putting together complex plays more difficult than it should have been.

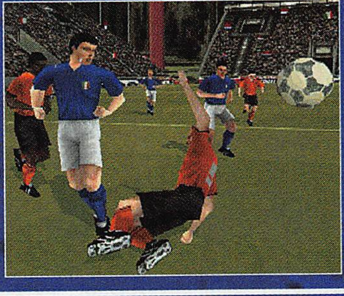
Both of these problems are close to being solved in the very early build that I've been playing. The game flows much more naturally now that the speed has been upped and the AI upgraded. This is clearly demonstrated by several attacks I managed to put together by utilizing fast wingers to bring the ball up on the sides and putting a high pass inside the box for the attackers to finish. This simple but ah-so-common soccer play was almost impossible in the first game.

There's still a lot of work to be done, but improvements are definitely being made in the right places, plus there's going to be more leagues, classic teams and stadiums which soccer fans are sure to appreciate.









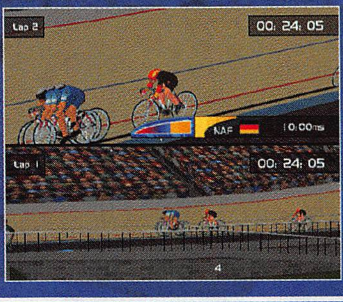
Sydney Olympics [Dreamcast]

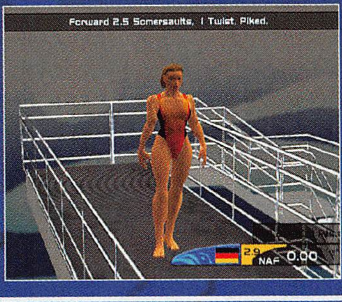
This is a packed sports summer, no doubt about it. First you had the European Soccer Championships during June, the 'What's New in the World of Doping This Year' Tour De France and (by the time you read this) the Sydney Olympics should be close. Eidos snapped up the license to produce games of the event (actually the publisher has a six year deal with the Olympic organization) and *Rollcage* developers Attention to Detail (ATD) are finishing up various versions in development. The new shots we have on show are from the Dreamcast version.

While the developers maintain that this will be the most realistic sports game ever, it's still going to stay true to the tried and tested smash-the-buttons-as-fast-you-can school of gameplay (which is fine by us). The three different game modes that are on offer are Olympic, Arcade and Coaching with the first one being a single-player mode where one must successfully compete lower-ranking events to get to the main events. Arcade is, of course, the *Track and Field* version of Sydney 2000 and Coaching is basically a demonstration mode.

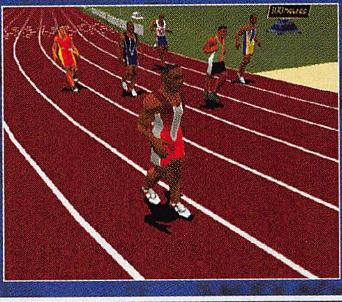
The events are as follows: hammer, triple jump, 110m hurdles, Javelin, 100m freestyle, high jump, swimming, weight lifting, spring cycling, skeet shooting, platform diving and kayaking.

Due to the Olympic organization's insistence, there are some not-so-interesting sounding events like kayaking which hopefully won't be as painful an experience as skiing was in *Winter Games* back in the day... I still shudder from the thought of having to hammer the button for 4 minutes straight... uhh...









Japan Now!

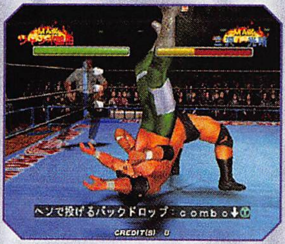
The State of Japanese Gaming...

This is the time when things get very interesting in Japan. Two of the three major players in the console business have moved to the 128-bit market and, although software still moves in massive quantities, the era of 32 bits seems to be rapidly coming to a close.

Unfortunately, 128-bit is proving to be a little tricky. Sega simply cannot sell a lot of games. A few titles have had some success (reaching 500,000 copies), but when amazing games like *Jet Set Radio* and *Crazy Taxi* sell less than 200,000, something is very wrong. Sony also can't move PS2 games. They can sell as many PS2's as are made, but the system's software only holds around 8% of the market.

And now, Nintendo has confirmed that the Dolphin and Game Boy Advanced will be shown at Spaceworld 2000 in August. We'll be there, and back here next month with all the information on Nintendo's 128-bit machine (as well as *Mario Kart Advanced*) and give you a first look. **Kodomo**

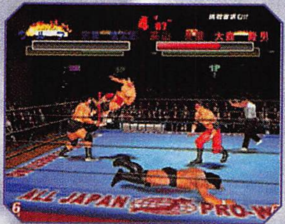
Giant Gram 2000 (Dreamcast)

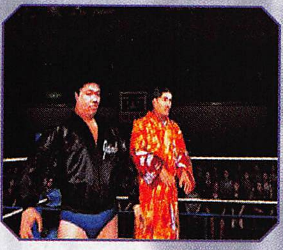




What's to say? If you're a fan of wrestling, the latest in the *Giant Gram* series promises to give you more of the good stuff. Sega will give you every chance to body slam, pin or use 'burning techniques' on the DC come Fall.









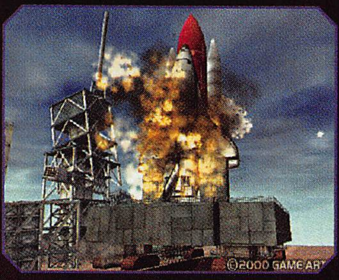

Hundred Swords (Dreamcast)

If you've been wondering what Sega's Smilebit team would do after *Jet Set Radio*, this is for you. *Hundred Swords* is billed as a 'real time simulation' game, but plays out as a 4 player network arcade game, soon to become a DC game. With high quality graphics and characters on par with Capcom, Smilebit might just have struck gold again.
















Gun Griffon Blaze
(PlayStation2)








While GameArts has been getting a lot of press for *Grandia II* (and deservedly so), they have also been hard at work on a PS2 mech fighting/simulation game named *Gun Griffon Blaze*. In a desolate future, many years after World War III, you play the part of a soldier working for Japanese military, who must fight multiple battles in every corner of the world (such as Tibet and Guam). Although a version of *Gun Griffon* was released a few years back for the Japanese Sega Saturn, this isn't a simple upgrade (a la *Sakura Wars*), but an entirely new game. Expect a full review of this mech strategy/action game in our next issue.

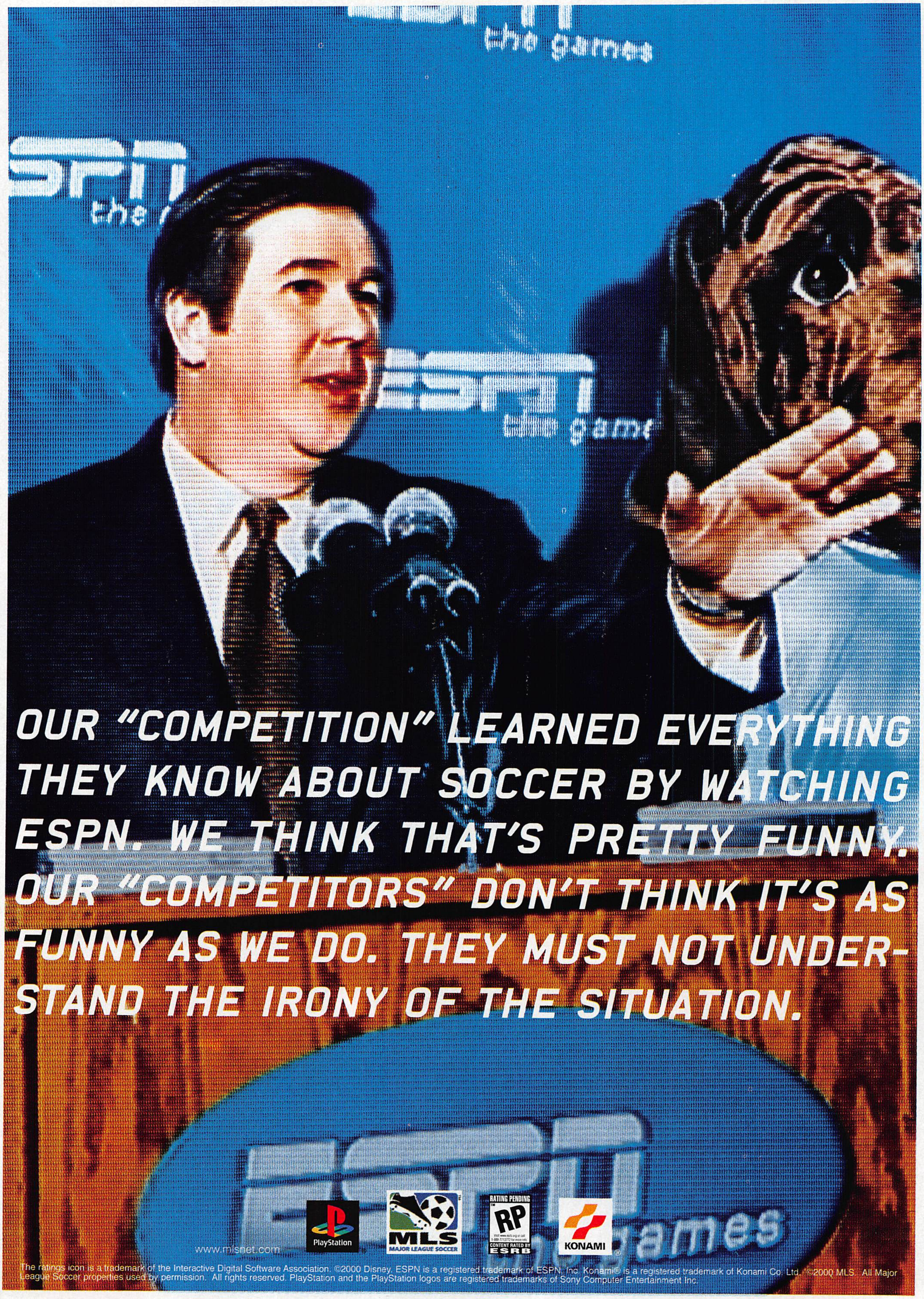




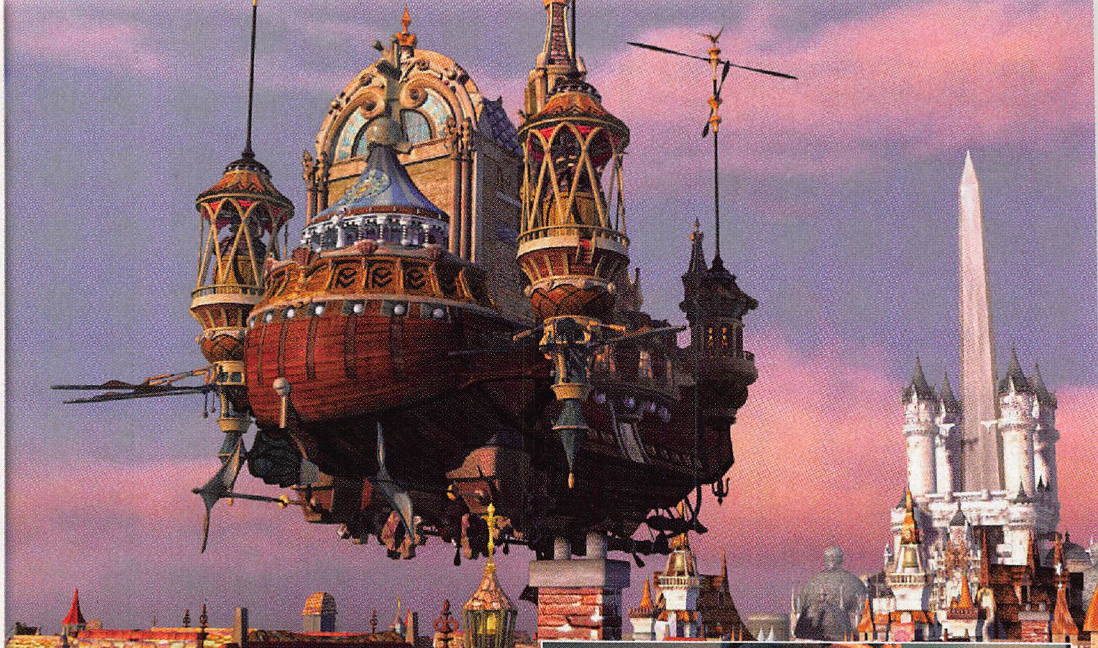


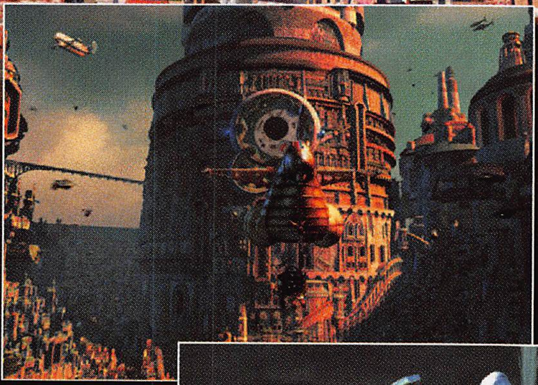





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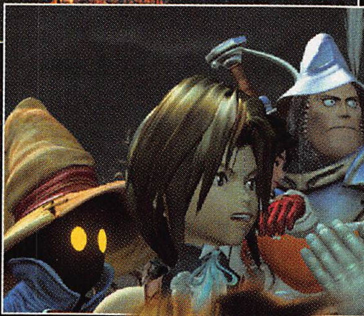

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prologue

Final Fantasy VIII — a now legendary game, critically acclaimed by nearly all American media (except us), which ended up selling by the truckload, lending further credence to the notion that the very name *"Final Fantasy"* was enough to sell over a million copies. But despite the massive sales figures, something was amiss. Gamers in Japan were returning the game en masse because it wasn't what they wanted. Where were the fantasy themes and settings which made this series popular to begin with? Where were the airships and dragons... the swords and sorcery? The days of black and white magic appeared to have given way to anachronistic guns and ballroom dancing. And **what** was Square thinking when it took the classic magic system and junctioned it to a tedious magic scheme which *drew* all the fun out of the game? It was a time of trouble...





FINAL FANTASY® IX

FADE IN:

EXT. THE GAME WORLD OF EVERQUEST, NORRATH — 5 A.M. LAVA STORM MOUNTAINS, DEEP IN THE CENTER OF ANTONICA

A massive ogre doesn't notice the approach of a single lizardman, as it is intent on looting the corpse of a recently slain fire elemental. The lizardman slides up behind him.

LEVEL 1 LIZARDMAN
Sakaguchi-san, there is a disturbance among the public. The fans are displeased with FFVIII.

LEVEL 50 OGRE SHAMAN
Fool! Can't you see I'm working hard on Final Fantasy: The Movie here? Stay in character! <ahem> Me dumb ogre, yes?

CLOSE-UP OF OGRE SHAMAN — FREEZE FRAME HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI, CREATOR OF FINAL FANTASY.

LEVEL 1 LIZARDMAN
Umm... Fanssssss of the seriessss are upsssssset with Final Fantasssssssseee VIII. The fantasssssseee has been replassssed by futurisssstic technology. They want crystalsssss and airshipsssssss, sssssssir!

LEVEL 50 OGRE SHAMAN
Uhh, really? FFVIII... Bad?? O... K... Me fix! You find Amano.

INT. NEW YORK — 10 A.M. THE HERO ART EXHIBIT, DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN

Sunlight pours in through the stained glass windows, but the surrounding area is mostly dark. A nervous Japanese man in a business suit timidly approaches the figure crouched, huddled in the darkness on the other side of the room. He seems caught up in whatever he is doing.

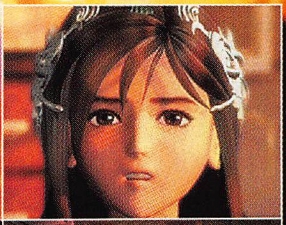
MYSTERIOUS FIGURE
I've been expecting you...

SQUARE MESSENGER
Amano-san? The Guch has a message for you... he would like you back to do character design for Final Fantasy IX.

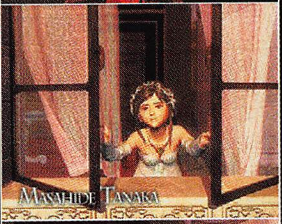
The mysterious figure quickly turns, holding a cape out to his side. Brandishing a paintbrush in his hand dramatically, his face is highlighted by the rays of light for the first time.

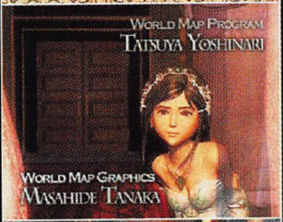


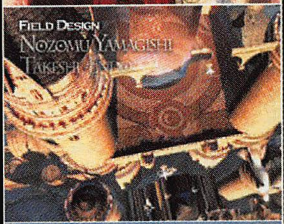


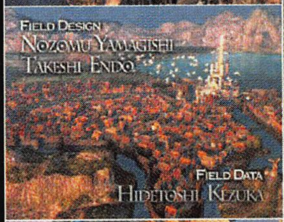














CLOSE-UP OF MYSTERIOUS FIGURE — FREEZE FRAME YOSHITAKA AMANO, CHARACTER DESIGNER, FINAL FANTASY I-VI.

MYSTERIOUS FIGURE
Come... we have much work to do...

INT. PARTS UNKNOWN — 3 A.M. MENTAL INSTITUTION, OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN

A violent thunderstorm rages outside. Inside the cell, we see a single figure in a straitjacket, facing the corner. He seems oblivious to the world, mumbling indiscernibly to himself. His eyes are glazed over and his speech incoherent.
A security guard opens the door for the messenger.

SECURITY GUARD
It'll do ya no good... Understand? He's as looney as a tune... always has been. I haven't seen him say one legible thing since the day he got here...

SQUARE MESSENGER
Please... let me try.

He approaches the man in the strait-jacket cautiously, touching his shoulder.

SQUARE MESSENGER
Nobuo? You are needed. Amano is back. We are doing a game with actual fantasy now. No more futuristic themes.

MAN IN STRAIT JACKET
Gamepro... good... Synthesizers... yes... Techno... Mmmm... The voices... they're unhappy. Noooooo!! Make it stop!! Mommy!!!

The crazy man starts sobbing... The messenger grabs him and shakes him violently.

SQUARE MESSENGER
Nobuo!?! Snap out of it! We NEED you back! We are doing it right this time. No more technology. Fantasy... Dragons... Crystals... You remember the crystals, don't you? Moogles... happy music? You MUST remember!

Lightning flashes, illuminating his face. His eyes are now clear... aware. He appears lost in thought...

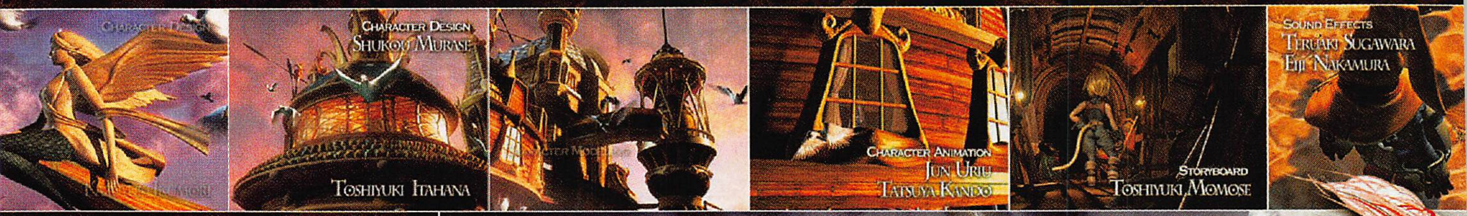
CLOSE-UP OF MAN IN STRAIT JACKET——FREEZE FRAME
NOBUO UEMATSU, COMPOSER, FINAL FANTASY I-VIII

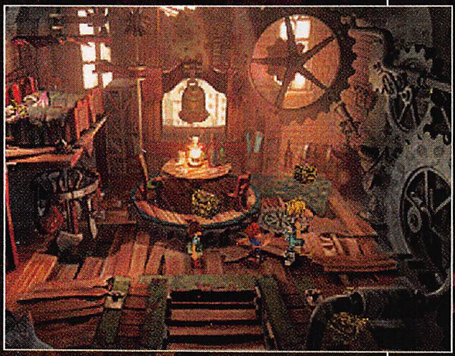
MAN IN STRAIT JACKET
Yes... The voices... They sing to me once again! Quick, my instruments... where are they??

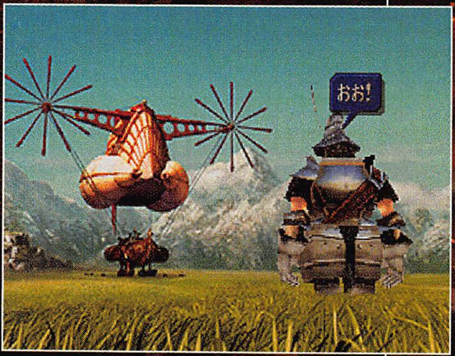
Developer - Squaresoft	1 Player	EGGO: Apology...
Publisher - Square EA	Available Late 2000	Accepted

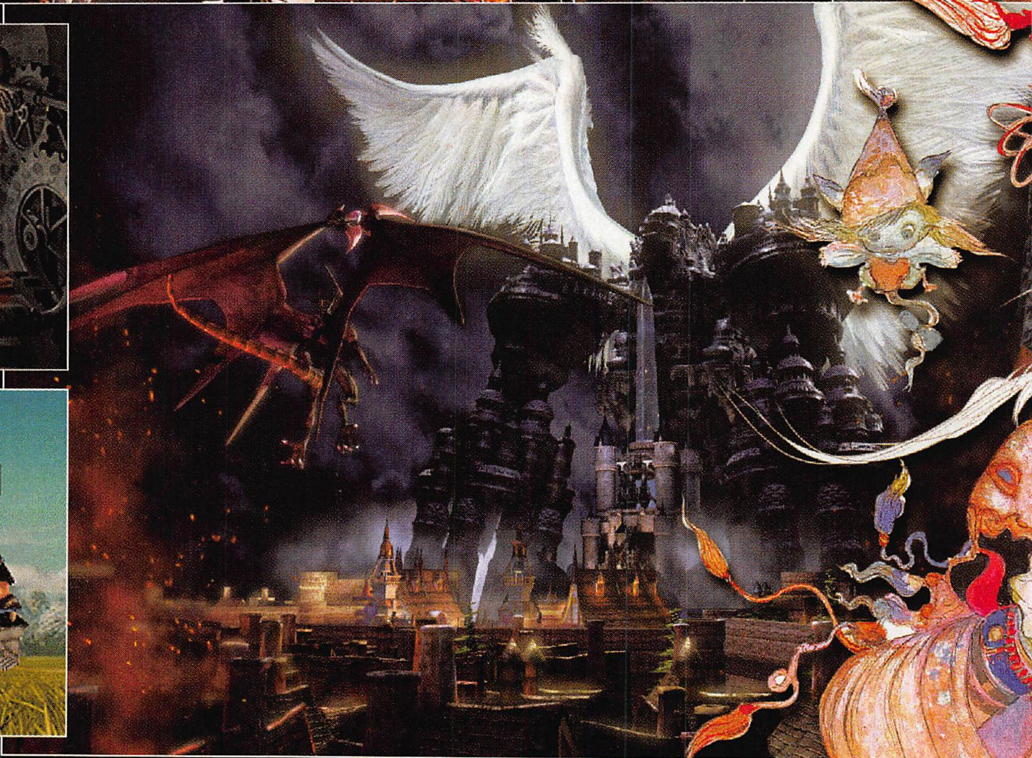
P PREVIEW

PlayStation









As my little scenario illustrated, the crew behind the original *Final Fantasy's* has finally been reunited, and the end result is earth-shattering. With Amano returning as image illustrator, the characters are full of charm and personality once again. No longer do they all look alike, as they did in *VIII*. In fact, they're not even all human-looking: The main character, Zidane, has a feline-like tail; Vivi is a tiny black magician whose face is only a set of yellow eyes hidden beneath a dark hat; and Cid looks like a dwarf from *Final Fantasy IV* (Lali-ho!). Not only that, the super-deformed look of yore (big heads, squat bodies) is back as well.

Just as important as the visual return to the classic *Final Fantasy*, the music has also taken a turn for the better. Gone are the psychotic techno beats of *FFVIII*. In their place, you'll find the classic sounds of the older games. In fact, *IX*'s battle music starts out sounding like *FFIV*'s battle music (*FFII* in America), but remixed! Talk about paying homage to the greats! Each of the characters appears to have their own theme again, heightening the personality even further. For example, Steiner, Princess Garnet's bodyguard, wears a clanking suit of armor, and he's usually accompanied by the oafish, 'lumbering big guy' music. His actions and mannerisms are also on the clumsily comical side.





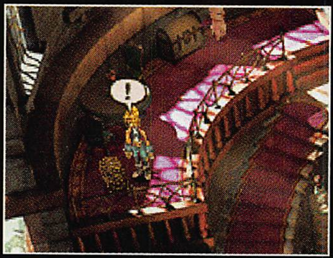
The gameplay has undergone an old-school makeover. Magic points are back, as well as ethers, and most importantly, simplicity has been restored. Instead of trying to decipher whether the hip bone's connected to the "Fire 1" bone—junctioning this to that, and then doing it all over again when the party changes... *FFIX* keeps it easy. Just like in *FFVI*, you are taught spells by equipping certain items. Like the espers of old, weapons, armor, and accessories now 'teach' your characters magic spells and new abilities (steal, counter, HP bonus, etc.) which can be used in battle. Even better, the same item can teach different spells, depending on the character who equips it, further adding to the depth and replay value.

search no more

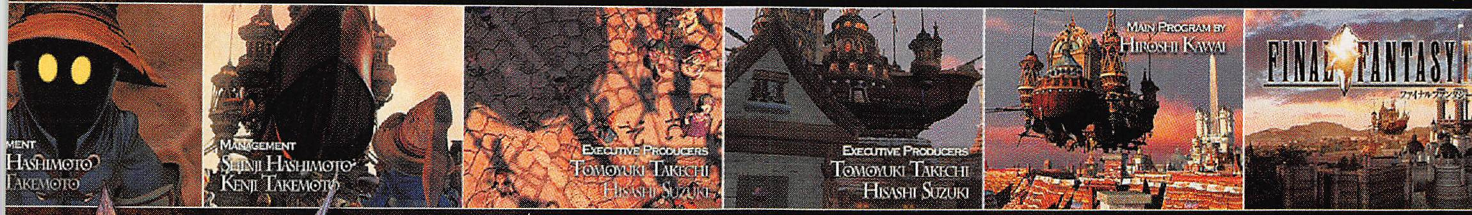
One feature which I really like puts an end to that senseless rubbing up against every piece of furniture in a room. Instead of walking around trying to hump everything with the action button, *FFIX* alerts you with a question mark or exclamation mark when your character's in the vicinity of an object to interact with.













trance

Limit breaks from the recent *Final Fantasy* games have been modified in *FFIX*. Now, when your character takes enough damage (which accumulates over multiple battles), he automatically goes into a Trance. When this happens, there's a flashy transformation (A & B), and your character becomes powered up for a few turns (similar to Terra's Morph in *Final Fantasy III* on SNES). Not only do you deal more damage, you also gain special abilities as well. For example, Vivi, who normally has the "Magic" command, acquires "W Magic" (C) when in a Trance. This lets him cast two magic spells per turn!

A


B


C


While a lot of the gameplay shows influence from the early *FF's*, some of the popular elements from *FFVIII* are returning as well. Faye Wong's theme song "Eyes on Me" was a hit in the last game, and now *FFIX* also has a theme song—this time it's "Melodies of Life," sung by popular Japanese singer Emiko Shiratori (why do I have this unnatural fear that Celine Dion will appear in an upcoming *Final Fantasy*? <sigh>). The addictive dueling card game is also back, with new features and added depth (though I've stayed away from it so far, opting to finish this preview before plunging into the darkness from which I may never return). Another new feature is the Active Time Events, which let you see what transpires in other parts of town during the same time frame. Simply press "Select" and you'll be transported to another part of town where the other characters in your party are interacting with townsfolk. This feature is completely optional, as it only provides more back story on what's going on behind the scenes, although you might want to tune in to learn some tips to make your journey easier.

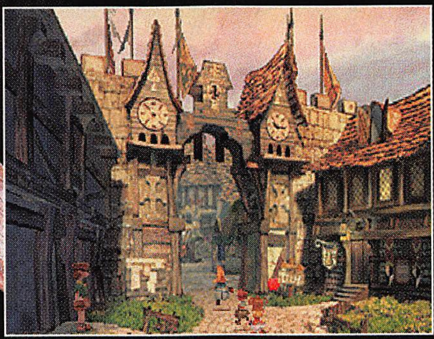


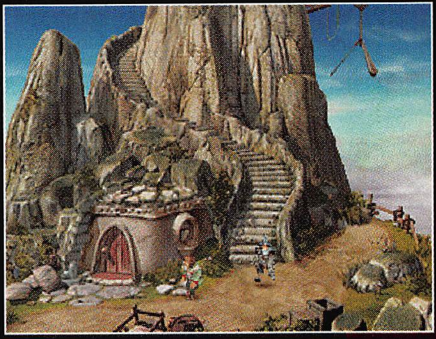
Then there are the little things... Character animation has been improved greatly over the recent *Final Fantasys*, the 2D backgrounds bustle with more life than before, and the CG-to-gameplay transitions are smoother as well. There are also small touches thrown in for long-time fans of the series—subtleties which make you point and scream, "Hey, I know where that's from!" Within the first hour alone, you'll be swamped with imagery from the *Final Fantasy's* of old: the game begins with CG of a majestic airship cruising over a busy town; moogles act as save points to record your progress, and almost right away, you're attacked by a giant red bomb which grows menacingly till finally exploding. The most emotional moment of the first disc came in the very beginning. Fighting in a tough battle with a boss, I was shocked when Zidane, one of my three party members, was struck down and killed by a single blow. Jumping into the fray, one of Zidane's pirate buddies rushes onto the screen from the sidelines, bringing the total number of party members up to four (after a phoenix down restored ol' Zidane)! What?? The days of 'two party members outside of the main character





















are over and done for on the PlayStation? Finally! I'd known earlier that *FFIX* would allow your party to be larger than three characters, but to see it happen in such dramatic fashion and in time of need (just like Rydia's dramatic return in *FFIV*)... it felt like such a classic *Final Fantasy* moment. This is the game that old school *Final Fantasy* fans have been craving all this time.



The story begins with Zidane and his thieving buddies plotting how they're going to kidnap Princess Garnet from the kingdom of Alexandria. They've been hired by Cid, ruler of Lindblum, to kidnap the princess because her mother, the Queen, has been recently attacking neighboring villages with a mysterious magical army for no apparent reason. Cid wants to get to the bottom of this. Zidane and his cohorts are thrown for a loop when Princess Garnet not only comes complacently, but she **wants** to flee the kingdom and find out what's going on with her mother. Along the way, the pair acquire the help of Steiner (Garnet's royal bodyguard) and Vivi, a young black wizard who gets caught up in the proceedings, as the group makes their grand escape from the Queen during a theatrical performance with the entire city looking on.

Sadly, my space has run out and this preview's coming to an end. The only thing I wish Square EA would change with the U.S. release is the frequency of the battles (I averaged two fights per screen in the Japanese final). The domestic version should be available by the end of the year (you can bet there's gonna be a hard push for a Christmas release), though it could conceivably slip until early 2001. We'll keep you posted on the latest rumblings of this monstrous title as they come to us. Preorder yours now! **E**







mognet

As anyone can tell you, there are a bunch of Mogs running around out there in the world. But it wouldn't do to have them all spread out, with no way to communicate, right? Because of this need, MogNet was created. Basically, it's a "mail" system through which all the little moogles keep in touch, staying abreast of all the latest dance steps and posting odds for the local Chocobo races... that sort of thing. If you choose to be a part of MogNet, your party acts as a courier of mail, which you deliver from one place to another. Once the mail's delivered, you're sure to receive a reward (luckily, it's not just a hearty "Kupo!" and a pat on the back...)





Character Profiles



Garnet Til Alexandros XVII

aka "Dagger" — (Age 16) A young and naive princess who many view as a spoiled brat. She's very inexperienced when it comes to interacting with the world since she was sheltered in a castle all her life, but hopefully her adventures with Zidane and company will open her eyes a bit.



Eiko Carol

(Age 6) Orphaned at an early age, Eiko was raised by summoners, people who taught her the ways of White Magic and how to summon powerful monsters to do your bidding (you know that's the first thing I'd teach a child of six—she's gotta be able to protect herself from a Tonberry in a dark alley, ya know). Fortunately, she's mature beyond her years, a cheerful child prodigy who shares a special friendship with moogles.



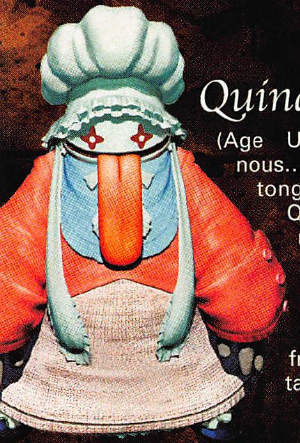
Edward Steiner

(Age 33) A knight of the royal family, Steiner is also Princess Garnet's lifelong guardian, sworn to protect her at all costs. He's a good person and a strong swordsman who takes his job very seriously.



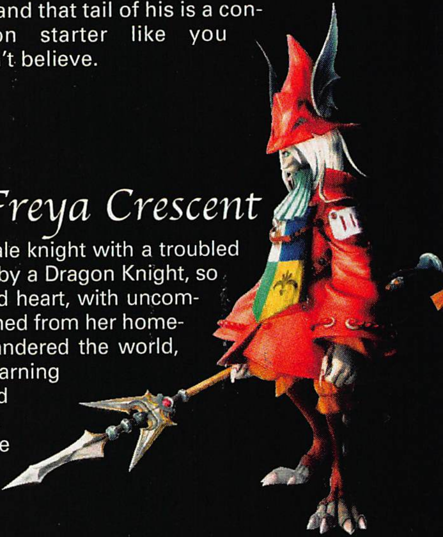
Zidane Tribal

(Age 16) A thief who steals treasure just as easily as he does lady's hearts. He's popular with the women, because of his charming personality and ready smile, and that tail of his is a conversation starter like you wouldn't believe.



Quina Quen

(Age Unknown) An androgynous... "thing" with a big floppy tongue from the Qu clan, Quina loves to eat and reproduce above all things else... (if only everyone else had life that good). Its favorite food is frogs, especially raw... tastes like chicken!



Freya Crescent

(Age 21) A courageous female knight with a troubled past, Freya grew up trained by a Dragon Knight, so she's strong of character and heart, with uncompromising principles. Banished from her homeland of Burmecia, Freya wandered the world, gaining experience and learning about life, until she is called upon in an hour of need. But will she be able to face the demons from her past?



Amarant Coral

(Age 26) A lone-wolf assassin who trusts nobody and believes that strength and power can overcome all. A strong believer in discipline, Amarant is constantly training his mind and body for combat. Cool and serious, he is, above all, a survivor.



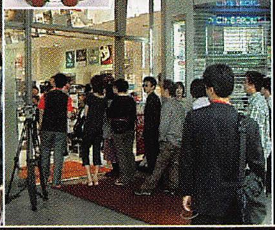
Vivi Orunitia

(Age 9) A black wizard who is shy, weak-willed, depressed, and searching for an identity. In short, he's got issues. His life seems to be spinning helplessly out of control, and then things really snowball when he gets caught up with Zidane and this wild cast of characters.





Final Fantasy IX Released in Japan!



You can bet the opening of a new *Final Fantasy* is a big event in Japan. It's practically a national holiday as gamers line up the night before to get their copies of the game as soon as stores open in the morning. *Final Fantasy IX* was no different. Preorders alone hit one million in only 17 days (the fastest of any *Final Fantasy* game). Those lucky pre-order people also received a plush Vivi doll. A jaw-dropping 2.6 million copies were shipped on the first day of release! Master of the universe, Square is also closing in on an astounding 30 million *Final Fantasy* games sold worldwide.

Dreamcast [DC]



- deSPIRIA [Import]
- Ecco the Dolphin
- NFL 2K1
- Power Stone 2
- Sakura Wars [Import]

COMING SOON
- Quake 3 Arena 10/10/00°
- Sega Marine Fishing 9/26/00
- Sonic Adventure 2 [Import] 11/15/00
- Star Wars Episode 1: Jedi Power Battles 9/25/00
- Street Fighter II X [Import] 11/22/00

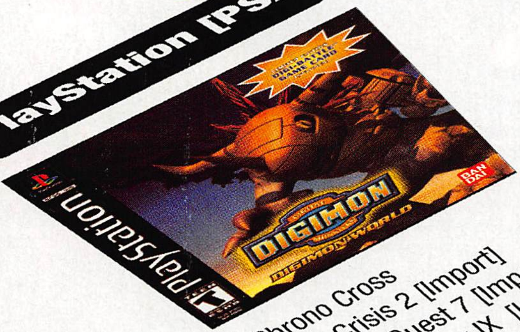
Nintendo 64



- Mario Story [Import]
- Mario Tennis
- Nintendo 64 Mini Pikachu System Blue Version [Import]
- Ogre Battle
- Torok 3: Shadow of Oblivion

COMING SOON
- Madden NFL 2001 9/26/00
- NFL Blitz 2001 9/19/00
- Pokemon Puzzle League 9/25/00
- Pokemon Stadium Gold/Silver [Import] 12/15/00
- Spiderman 9/26/00

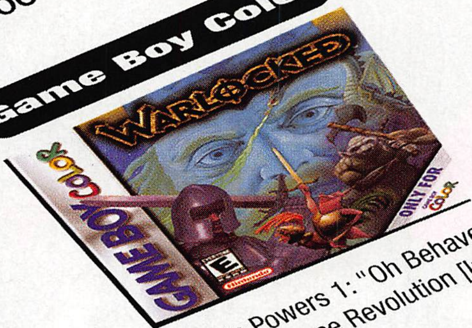
PlayStation [PSX]



- Chrono Cross
- Dino Crisis 2 [Import]
- Dragon Quest 7 [Import]
- Final Fantasy IX [Import]
- Spiderman

COMING SOON
- Dino Crisis 2 9/25/00
- Kamurai [Import] 11/05/00
- Metal Slug X [Import] 10/10/00
- Rockman X 5 [Import] 11/05/00
- Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2 9/19/00

Game Boy Color



- Austin Powers 1: "Oh Behave!"
- Dance Dance Revolution [Import]
- Perfect Dark
- Sakura Wars GB [Import]
- Spiderman

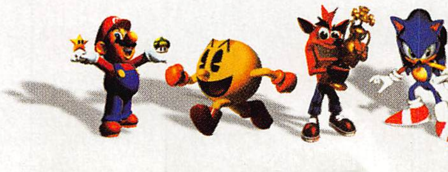
COMING SOON
- Dragon Warrior I & II 9/12/00
- Gauntlet Legends 9/26/00
- Pokemon Gold 10/15/0
- Pokemon Silver 10/15/00
- Who Wants to be Millionaire 9/25/00

PlayStation 2 [PS2]



- Gun Griffon Blaze [Import]
- Ring Of Red [Import]
- Shin Sangoku Musou [Import]
- Wild Wild Racing [Import]
- XFIRE [Import]

COMING SOON
- Final Fantasy X [Import] °3/20/01
- Madden NFL 2001 10/20/00
- Onimusha [Import] 11/15/00
- Silent Scope 10/24/00
- Street Fighter EX3 10/26/00



QUARTER CRUNCHERS





And Now, A Word From the Pulpit...



It's not very often anymore that I get truly lathered up over a game. Oh sure, I can get into a frothing, saliva-spewing, hyperbolic rant when the need arises: the much-maligned (outside of *GameFan*) *Strider 2*, for example, benefited from such a spastic state. However, it's a rare thing indeed when I'm truly taken aback by a new title. And while it's probably getting really old and really tired, it no doubt has a lot to do with the fact that games have evolved along a much different path than I would have liked to have seen: eschewing the tried and true 2D format of yesteryear for the shiny new frontier of 3D, something which developers are just now finally coming to grips with... sort of... And yes, there have been some remarkably well-done titles that have made successful and fruitful trips to the z-axis... and in some cases even faithful sojourns (especially in the case of games like *Sonic Adventure* and *Zelda: OOT*). Sometimes, though, I just wish developers would leave well enough alone, and concentrate their efforts on a fully evolutionary step instead of the revolutionary stampede into 3D; instead crafting a glorious homage to 2D on the newer hardware formats, showing that there is yet teeming, untamable life in the wilds of what was assumed to have been a dead-end... evolutionarily (and publicly) speaking, of course.

So imagine my surprise when SNK announces *Metal Slug 3* as a **wholly** (holy?) 2D pilgrimage to the gameplay-saturated world of the past. After drowning in the unfathomable depths of *Metal Slug X* some time ago, I was a little leery: after all, could SNK possibly top the bar they'd raised so precariously high? The leap required between the two chapters would have to be so staggeringly huge to elicit little more than a gasp of excitement in a sea of jaded gamers was such that I scarcely believed it could be done. In























METAL SLUG 3



fact, I think I might have bought into the 3D revolution because I, supreme defender of all that is 2D and good, had a hard time believing it. But believe it gamers, not only is *Metal Slug 3* the single most impressive, intense, explosive and over-the-top experience the Neo Geo hardware has ever known (eleven years old and still going strong), it also happens to be one of the greatest video games ever.

Where's the Coin Slot?

It's often been said about many games that they "resemble an animated cartoon" or "are like a painting come to life" or "it'll have you reaching for a coin slot" (ooh, that's an oldie but goodie) in reference to their graphical prowess. However, with the unveiling of 'super-consoles' like Dreamcast, PS2, and the upcoming X-Box and Dolphin, great graphics are becoming so routine that it *almost* makes people look past the frilly, doily-laden surface to what really matters: gameplay. However, being the visual creatures that we are, graphics are always going to make the biggest impression (unless, of course, you come equipped with a DVD player apparently). And to say the visuals in *MS3* are "godly," "awesome," and simply awe-inspiring is a most grievous understatement. If you can name a single 2D game that's a more stunning specimen of the pinnacle of hand drawn artwork and animation, I'll give you my copy of *Metal Slug 3*. But before I get a full head of steam going, let me put forth this scenario:

Ever played a 2D game that had it all: graphics, gameplay, music—the whole ball o' wax? But there was

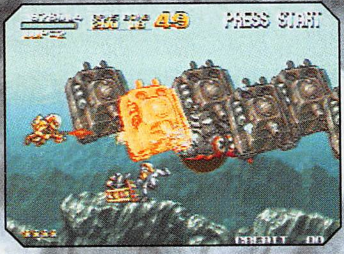


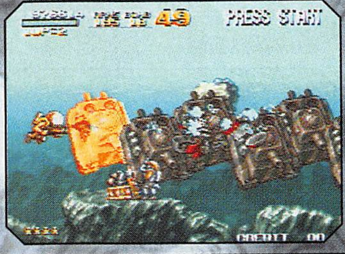














Viewpoint Score : 100	Developer - SNK / Publisher - SNK	1-2 Players / Available Now	ECM: Gentlemen, start your ranting...



R REVIEW





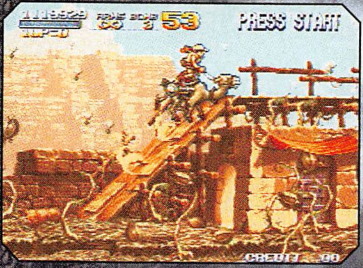












always this nagging feeling that there was something missing: something in the form of a frame of animation missing here or there. Oh sure, it wasn't really a big deal, but it was sometimes distracting and you always wondered why that exact frame was nixed; why they couldn't have cut something more incidental? In fact, the game would have been perfect if only it had all the frames it looked like it needed—this malady usually infects ports of Capcom arcade fighters to home consoles...especially on PlayStation. Though sometimes, even the arcade original is 'missing' a frame or two.

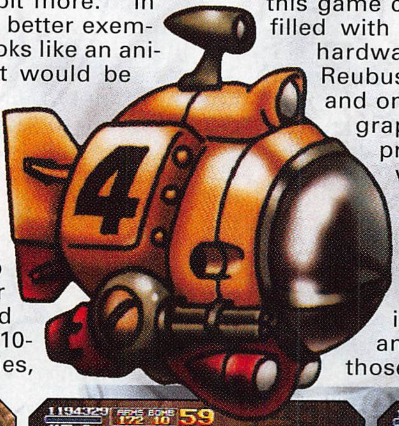
Ah, but the single most graphically impressive 'trick' in *Metal Slug 3* doesn't lay in the monstrous sprites, the stunningly animated bosses, or even the incredible rainbow-shaming color palette. No, the most stunning aspect is that it's not missing a single frame of animation. Nowhere in this game will you think to yourself, "wow, this looks great, but too bad they couldn't just animate *x* a bit more." In fact, there is no game that better exemplifies that old adage "it looks like an animated cartoon"—hell, that would be an insult— especially in regard to the sorry state of animation today (anybody else gagging on *Titan A.E.*?).

Everything in this game is animated so perfectly, so flawlessly, so bloody heavily that your mind will be hard-pressed to take it all in, even after 10-12 plays. Soldiers, zombies,



tanks, helicopters, pick-ups, backgrounds, etc. from the lowliest blade of grass to the largest, multi-sprited screen-eating boss is animated beyond perfection. In fact, it's so excruciatingly well done that you'll even curse it on occasion. For example, when you die (and you will die... a lot) the actual death animation can take up to 3 seconds to play out—3 seconds on a single death animation! And this while you're screaming to get back into the thick of a particularly intense firefight.

To say that SNK left nothing to chance would be an understatement. They devoted any and everything to make sure that this game could stand out in arcades filled with the latest eye candy, on hardware that is old even by Reubus' standards. I could go on and on and on and on about the graphics in this game and probably even fill the issue with just musings on the visuals alone, but I think that all you need to do is take a gander at the screens splayed out across these pages and imagine them in motion—and my bet is that even those of you with the most















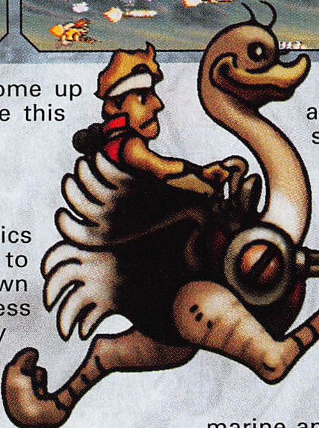








vivid of imaginings will come up short when you finally see this beast in motion.



Choose Your Own Adventure

And while the graphics alone are reason enough to keep shoving quarters down its gaping, near-bottomless maw, it's the game play that'll keep you coming back for more even after you've seen all the sites and sounds it has to offer.

Unlike previous versions of *Metal Slug*, the newest member of the family offers a little bit more than just standard increases in weapons, vehicles (oh the vehicles!) and game play accoutrements. No, not only did SNK go the full nine on the graphics, they went all the way down the street, got in a cab, went to the airport and flew around the world three times to bring you, the gamer, something you haven't seen in an action shooter since *Contra Hard Corps* on Genesis: multiple paths through the game...and that's only the smallest tip of a massive, Titanic-dwarfing iceberg of additions, revamps, and enhancements. In fact, it's probably safe to say that it's less a sequel and more a re-birth for the entire series.

For example (and this is just one of many) on the first level alone you're presented with three different routes through the level: on foot, braving monstrous crabs and fearsome flying foes; on a boat, cruising down a river choked with enemy soldiers and artillery; or take to a submarine and cruise under everything—just be wary of the large number of rather big moray eels, enemy subs, and more giant crabs. Every level in the game features a choice as to what path you'll take, and while some are more spectacular than others, you'll play the game multiple times just to see 'em all. And keep an observant eye out for even more hidden areas—say 'hi' to the cannon-toting pachyderm on level two.

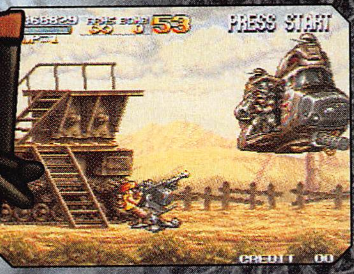




Arcade Run!

This is where I sign off on *MS3*. If you're still gripping this mag in your sweaty little mitts at this point, what are you doing?! Get off your backside and race to the nearest arcade to partake in the best arcade game of the past year (and the best Neo Geo game **ever**)—seems that the 2D game play action of *Strider 2* was only a warm-up...this is where we separate the men from the boys....

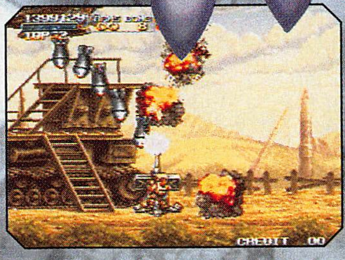
ECM is ready and willing to slug it out with anyone that even tries to tell him this game doesn't deserve a 100.

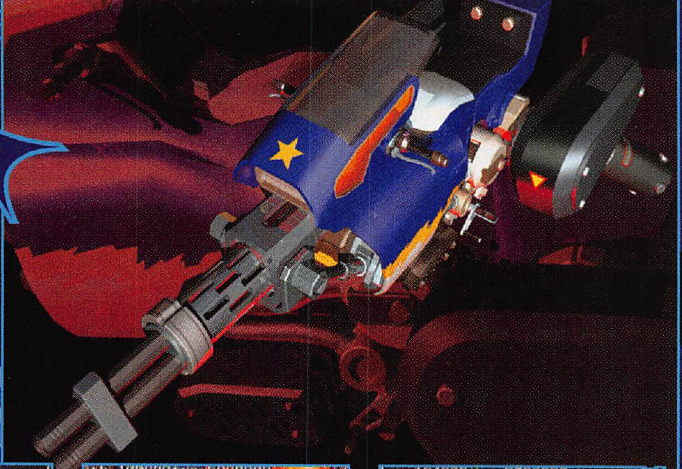











Welcome to Violent City

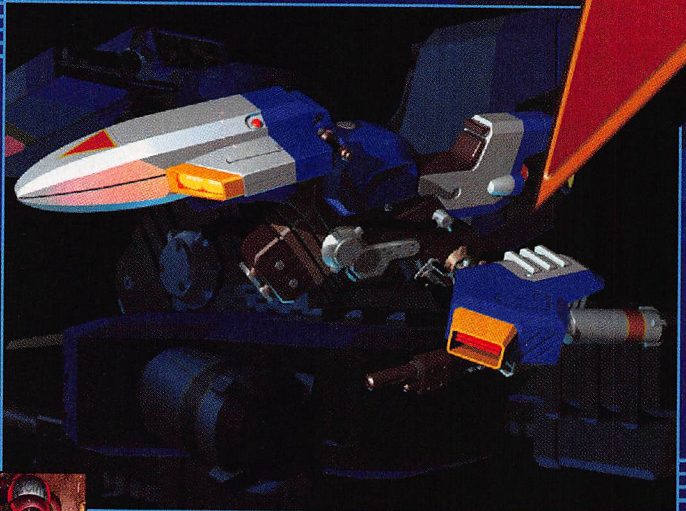
Sometimes I sit back and ask myself if I'm going too easy on a game because it's a shooter. After all, it isn't too often that I despise shoot-'em-ups, especially those of an arcade-spawned nature—and if anything's against my nature, it's **not** despising things, <grin>. However, when there are only really four big Japanese shmup developers (no, Takumi and *Giga Wing* don't count... yet), it makes things more dicey, since, in each of their ways, they've all mastered the format; which makes my job easy, and your life (in trying to find and play these games in their true arcade form—no emu's here) a living hell. But as anyone who's ever tried to obtain a copy of PC Engine *Dracula X* can tell you, the extreme expense (and personal pain) makes it all (sorta) worth it in the end. And along those lines, here's another shmup that you won't see outside of Japan except on your PC (if you're that lame): Raizing's *Armed Police Batrider*.







Armed Police Batrider



Raizing is generally, my second favorite shoot-'em-up-producing powerhouse, just behind the inimitable Cave (of *ESPrade*, *DoDonPachi* and *Guwange* 'fame'). They've crafted such shooter classics as the *Great Mahou* series as well as a pair of eBay's reigning over-priced Saturn champs, *Battle Garegga* and *Soukyu Gurentai*—great games, but if you're paying over $50 a piece for either one, you're getting raped. However, *APB* (ooh, neat) didn't make it to Saturn or any other home console. It's a bona fide, arcade-only experience (I repeat: Emulation is for the weak).

Can't Teach an Old Dog New Tricks

APB may only be another vertically scrolling shooter, but what it does it does amazingly well. For those of you that are into pure reflex-based experiences, where a nanosecond's hesitation will end in a fiery demise, this one's for you. Like many other completely over-the-top vert scrollers (*Batsugun* comes to mind), *APB* throws hordes of enemies, shrapnel and firepower



REVIEW	ECM: All Points Blaster	Developer - Raizing	1-2 Players	Viewpoint Score: 88
		Publisher - 8ing	Available Now Japan	







at your swiftly approaching craft and dares you to get beyond the first three levels with a credit's worth of lives intact—my guess is that if you aren't a seasoned shmup vet, you're gonna add to that shrapnel count in a very spectacular way—especially over the first hour or so of play.

The nice thing about *APB* is that it really doesn't feature any gimmicky gameplay. It's all fairly straightforward shooting action with no lock-on lasers, no shields—nothing but you, some bombs and some truly eye-shattering firepower. You haven't seen power-up levels this manic since the mighty Toaplan's *Batsugun* (incidentally, Cave is what's left of that legendary shmup developer) and anybody's that's played that weapon-fest knows of what I speak.

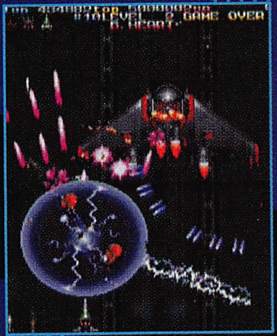


A Cast of Thousands

To be sure, there are **plenty** of ships to pilot in *APB*. Not only does it sport its own collection of mutants and misanthropes, it also stars most of the playable characters from Raizing shooters of yore: Miyamoto of *Great Mahou* fame, the Baron from *Battle Garegga* and assorted other members of the various mythos. Sort of like the inclusion of the *Great Mahou* characters in *Battle Garegga* if you beat that game (or just fiddled with the options mode). What this means is variety, variety, variety. While some craft obviously play somewhat alike, the sheer number should keep you coming just to see which three are the most deadly combo for your particular skill level.







Oh, and that's the rub: Instead of piloting the same ship through the entire game, each time you die you switch to a different character. What this means is that you can't simply get to know a single pilot—you need to master at least three (unless of course you can muck with the dip switches to allow the same craft). This throws a new and interesting wrinkle in the mix and forces you to adjust accordingly.



She's not Pretty, But She'll Do

Surprisingly enough, *APB* is not one of the more graphically spectacular shooters released in recent years. This is surprising because Raizing has done some of the most graphically impressive games in recent memory: from the staggering *Soukyu Gurentai* (rendered sprite madness) to the most graphically intense PS fighting game ever (no, not *Tobal 2*), *Bloody Roar*. Don't get me wrong, it looks decent but it's nothing more than a really goosed-up 16-bit game, featuring decent color, a grievous number of sprites, and none of the special effects that you'd even come to expect on the SNES. Still, you won't likely care as the game is so utterly playable that graphics are going to be the furthest thing from your mind when you boot this beast up.

"Awesome!"

When it's all said and done, *APB* is a solid, if standard shooter. It's got all the requisites: massive power ups, blazing spritage, and a difficulty level to humble even the most skilled player. If we're really lucky, Raizing may even see fit to port this one to some sort of shmup collection for Dreamcast or other lucky console, if not, there's always <ack> emulation (see below)... **ECM**



To Emulate or Not Emulate

We here at GameFan have never taken a really strong stance for or against emulation of arcade games, let alone console games. For the most part, if you're downloading a game you don't own, that's a big no-no legally and you should **really** go out and buy a copy of the game you're 'borrowing.' However, forgetting all the legal chicanery involved, nothing beats playing games in their natural state, i.e. on the original machine, with original controllers—and this is especially true of arcade games.

HYPER

2 Bona Fide NEW Jaguar Games!?!

I've been often accused of not letting things die: 2D, the '80s, all-protein diets, Dango jokes (we miss ya, lad), but especially old video games—which comes in handy when you have to write a monthly feature built around them. Generally speaking, the selection process for Graveyard isn't exactly a scientific process. No, it doesn't involve 3 live chickens, some lemon juice and Fury's self-respect... no, it simply comes down to a. whether someone emails me and suggests something or b. (and more likely) I'll pull out the old dart board, list some games on a few scraps of paper, and then toss darts till I find that month's game or games. However, once in a while my decision is rendered fairly simple. For instance, about a year ago we ran a story on two **new** Jaguar games. Yeah, that's right, the **Atari** Jaguar. Two bona fide new games, available for purchase on or around their respective previews thanks to the industrious folks at Songbird Productions. The two titles were *Protector* (a ramped-up *Defender* clone) and *Skyhammer* (essentially *G-Police* before there was such a thing). Apparently those two games did well enough to justify **more** new product. And as such, I'm now staring at Songbird's latest with *Hyper Force* and perhaps the single most anticipated Jag game of all time, Scatalogic's *Battlesphere*. And since we're the only magazine left on the planet that'll even give them a passing glance, here once again, are the last Jaguar games... though I imagine that's not even true, right, Carl?

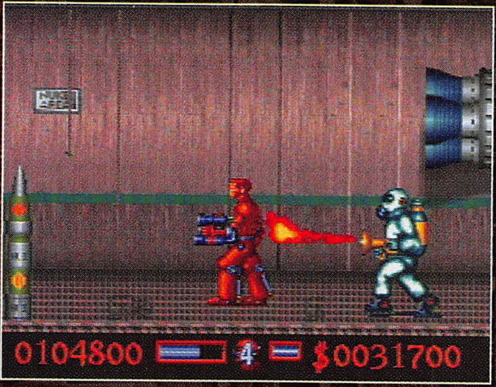
Hyper Force: Contra Finally Does the Jag

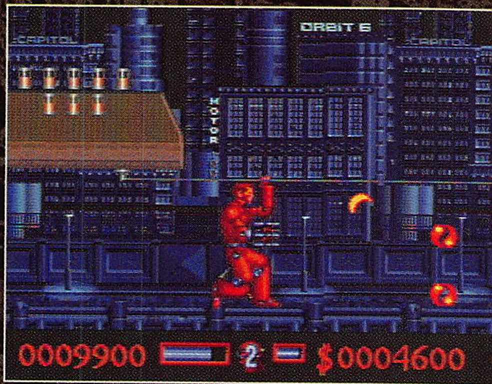
Back when games were games and gamers were gamers, there was one class of game every console had to nail to hold its head high: a side scrolling, balls-to-the-wall, *Contra*-style action shooter. Yep, the Genesis got über-games such as *Gunstar Heroes*, *Contra Hard Corps* and the Blue Sky-powered *Vectorman 1&2* (with *Midnight Resistance* for back-up); the SNES was blessed with *Contra: The Alien Wars* and Acclaim's *Alien 3*; and the Neo Geo got the overgod of them all, the *Metal Slug* series—even the PlayStation got the super-hot *Project Overkill*. Nowadays, the closest we get are games like *Fur Fighters* and *MDK2*. While they're OK games, they hardly reach the illustrious heights of their (here it comes) 2D forebears.

Now it's conventional wisdom that the Jag failed for many reasons: lousy marketing, bad games, the list goes on and on. And sure, these are certainly valid points. However, the Jag did



Surprise, surprise! Not one, but TWO brand spankin' new Jaguar games. Think you'll see these covered anywhere else? Not likely. Who's your Daddy? That's right, GameFan...





FORCE

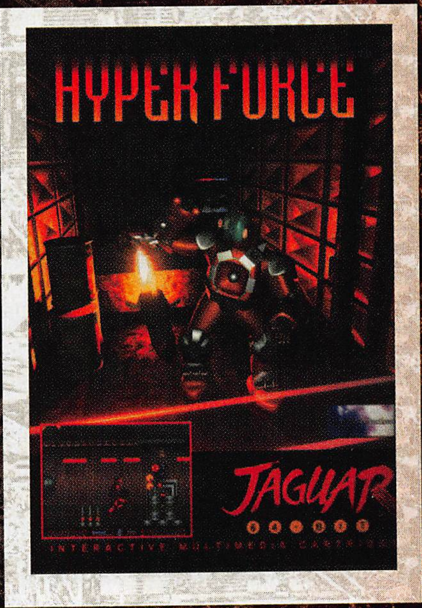
play host to some amazing titles, and while I'm not going to recount them (again) I will say that I was happy that I owned a Jag—can't say the same for the 32X (and don't start with me about it only being a peripheral, <grrr>). However, Atari also missed the boat on a lot of key genres. One of the biggest 'What the hell were they thinking?' mistakes came in the form of not having one of the aforementioned action shooters in its line-up... something Songbird Productions has just now rectified in the form of *Hyper Force*.

Long ago orphaned by Bethesda Softworks, after they reached the staggering conclusion that Atari wasn't going to make it, it's now in a box and available for purchase. Songbird worked diligently to finish the incomplete ROM and now Jag fans everywhere can get a taste of just what *Contra* may have been like on the Atari's defunct feline.

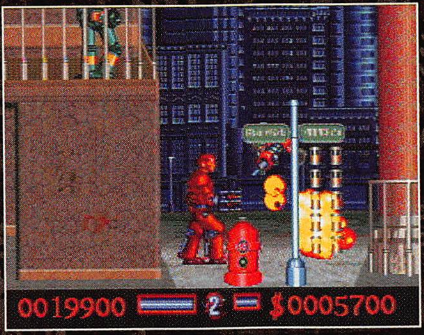
In *Hyper Force* your duty is to infiltrate (euphemism for blowing the living snot out of everything that comes across your path) the Trans Con corporate empire. They run an illicit Pokemon manufacturing ring and are subverting America's youth, so your cause is certainly just. OK, maybe not: but does it really matter? You're here to kill for the thrill of it—who needs justification (ooh, can't wait for the senators to get a hold of that sentence, <snicker>).

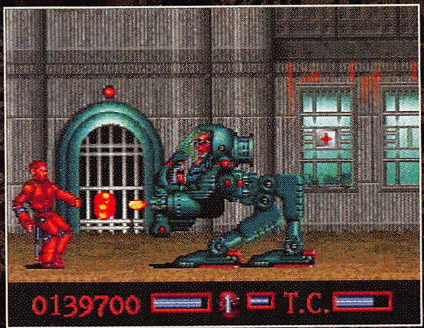
So you'll blaze through level after level, leveling foes, and collecting cash to buy bigger and better implements of destruction. The graphics are solid, if a little underanimated, but always remember this caveat: it's a Jaguar, knucklehead, not a Dreamcast (or even a Nuon—more on that next month). The color pallete is decent, if a little dark and the action is fast and furious. Best of all, the game isn't a complete cakewalk and it's not like you'll waltz in and own the joint—there'll be none of that 'put your head down and hold the fire button down' type gaming to be found here.

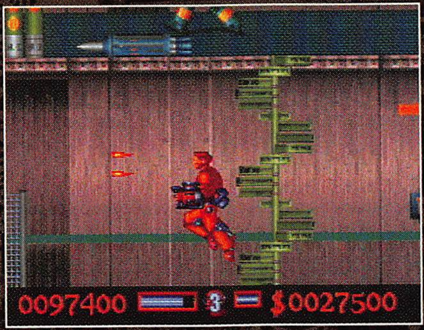
Essentially, *HF* mimics most other side-scrolling action shooters: gather weapons, ammo, money (yes, money); solve some minor puzzles; and "kill the hell" out of a legion of bad guys. The nice thing here is that the game is actually pretty decent. Sure, it's not gonna sneak

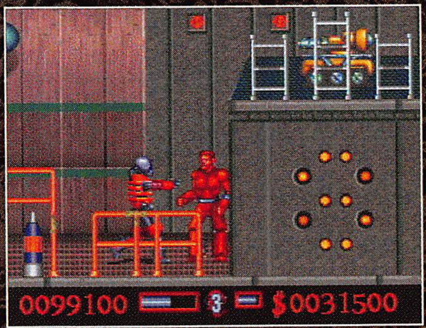


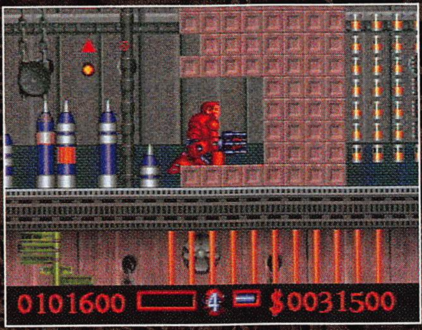












up and deliver a nice fat shotgun blast to the back of *Metal Slug 3*'s head, but it's a pretty nice little package nonetheless.

As you move through the levels, efficiently (or depending on your style, inefficiently) taking out foe after foe, you'll collect cash to buy bigger and better 'tools' to make Larry down in processing think "Hey, maybe I should have taken the day—<urk>...<bleh>."

The sprites are suitably large and the backgrounds are pretty detailed. Animation is a bit lacking, though this could be attributed to the fact that Songbird didn't have a lot to work with when they acquired the code from Bethesda. What's here is good, but a little more animation would have been nice.

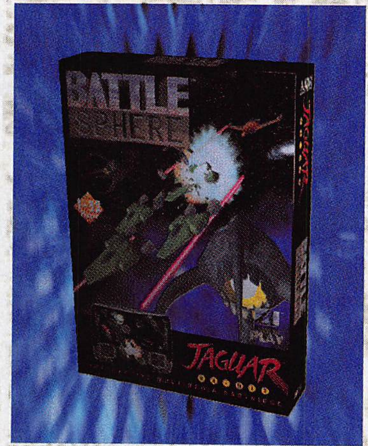
So, one more hole plugged in the hemorrhaging Jag library. Now Carl (the prez of Songbird) where's Native and Bomberman? Give me those and we can talk about some *serious* coverage. If you're interested in obtaining a copy of *Hyper Force* or any other of Songbird's already released Jag and Lynx (oh yes!) games, track 'em down on the web at songbird.atari.net and tell 'em GameFan sent ya! **ECM**

BATTLE SPHERE

Battlesphere: Star Raiders 2000?



Oh yes, word has it that when *Battlesphere* went into development back at the dawn of time, Atari themselves quaked in unseemly fear. It seems they had a title by the name of *Star Raiders 2000* (a remake of the seminal Atari 2600/Atari computers classic to go with their remakes of *Tempest* and *Defender*) in the pipeline, but once they got a look at *Battlesphere* it wasn't long before they pulled the plug on the unworthy one. Since then, people have clamored, begged, pleaded, kicked, screamed, yelled, threatened and then some to see this game completed. And lo and behold, earlier this year it finally was! Sure, nobody actually believed it (even as I slipped my check into the mail, I had my doubts) but amazingly shortly thereafter two brand new copies of *BS* landed in my lap (two copies? Oh yes!).



See, BS was in development for a little bit... I don't know if anyone's sure as to how long anymore, but let's just say it's been a long, long, long time coming. And now that it's here, should anyone care? Should even the off-the-wall, never say die, "Nuon will own you all," rabid Atarian fanbase accept this Johnny come lately? Oh I'd say so...

The old adage goes: Good things come to those who wait. Well, for those of you that waited and waited and waited and waited it's a pretty good thing. In fact, you might say it's the best Jaguar game ever made... though I'd probably put it in my top 5 (behind *Tempest 2K*, *AvP*, *Doom* and *Cybermorph*).

Battlesphere is the Jaguar's answer to games such as *Wing Commander*, *Descent: Freespace* and yes, the immortal *Star Raiders*... with one twist. Or actually, maybe it isn't really a twist when compared to the two PC behemoths I mentioned, but for a console game it has one thing **really** going for it: it's networkable.



That's right, in light of Sega's recent announcement of SegaNet, it's nice to see that not everyone's given up on the networkable system idea—even if is on a 'dead' console. That "two copies" comment suddenly makes a lot more sense, eh? And when it comes right down to it, two copies hardly does it justice as the game can support up to 16 (!) players networked (or 32 if two play on each unit). Naturally, of course, the odds of that ever happening are one in a billion or so, but if you have the right hardware (16 TVs, 16 Jags, enough network cable and some Catboxes—don't get me started on those) you could probably recreate the space battle at the conclusion of "Return of the Jedi"... sans Billy Dee Williams.

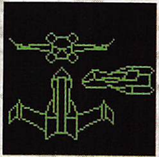
Yep, the game is fully linkable and fully versus mode ready. And that's what makes *BS* so incredibly fun to play. Instead of facing down a legion of enemy star fighters, battling out for control of the galaxy (which you can also do in 'Gauntlet' mode), you can face off against a friend on a second (or third, or fourth...) Jag. This is where the game really shines and is a testament to not only the hardware but the serious programming put into this puppy. It doesn't hurt that you can choose from a veritable fleet of fighter craft to square off against one another in (unlike most FPS' you're not all the same character).

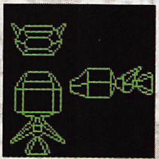
There is one other mode that deserves special note, however: Alone Against the Empire is a pseudo-strategy game that not only arcade jocks will get into a lather over, but strat fans as well. You get access to a map (full o' those lovely hexes that strat fans do so adore) and you'll need to cruise all over it in a mad dash to stop the insidious empire. Suffice it to say, if you're looking for more than just an arcade-style shoot-'em-up, you'll be quite pleased.

Other things of note: The graphics are incredible. Yeah, yeah, it's only a Jag game, but there's full gouraud shading on the ships, t-mapped decals all over the craft and even a lens flare (I know, I know; kill yourself, right?). The sound effects are also particularly well done.

Unfortunately, I've already run **way** over my word count for these couple of pages on the newest Jag wares. Needless to say you should run (not walk) to your nearest web site to score a copy (or two!) of *Battlesphere*. As of right now they've long since burned through their initial allotment of carts, but if demand is high enough, who knows... and a bit of pleading from me to Scatalogic—give us a Dreamcast rev of this game!!! Talk to Sega, talk to somebody but give us this game all done up! **ECM**

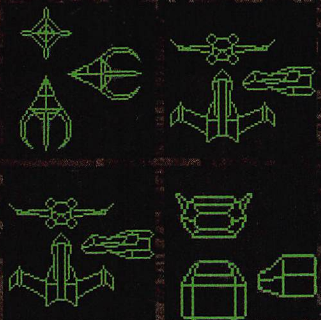




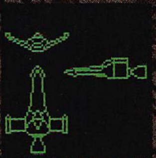


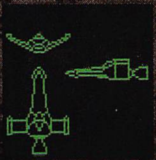
















Jaguar JAMMA Joystick

Yep, not only do we have two new Jag games, but a new Jag peripheral as well! Damn, if only the PC Engine community was as die-hard as these guys... I guess I can dream, <sigh>. Anyway, what you get here is essentially an arcade component-based joystick for use with your Jag—the stick, button, switches, etc. are built with the same parts you'd find at your local house of *Street Fighter* (oh sorry, brief flashback to the mid-'90s). It's lovingly assembled here in the USA and there's also a model available for 3DO (believe it or not). You can get more info (and buy one!) at www.goatstore.com. Yes, it's a weird name, but it's a cool stick—and hey, you'll probably be the only kid on your block with one.











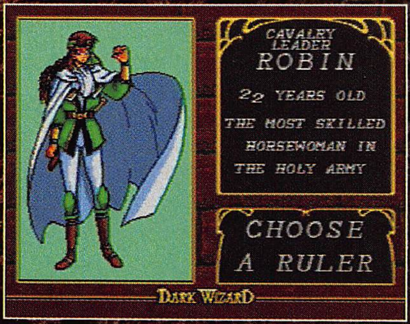
















"...phenomenally well implemented play mechanics..."

DARK

Before *Final Fantasy Tactics*, before *Dragon Force*, and before even *Ogre Battle*... there was *Dark Wizard*. A throwback to old-school strategy games such as *Master of Monsters*, *Dark Wizard* was a shining example of the power of the Sega CD, yet somehow it fell through the cracks, left behind before it had a chance to set the high-water mark in its genre.

A classic strategy RPG, *Dark Wizard* was buoyed by an epic story, deep gameplay, and phenomenally well implemented play mechanics. Much like the strategy RPGs that flooded the PC by SSI, *Dark Wizard* allowed gamers to pick up a sword and lead his armies across a continent in an attempt to thwart the plans of a maniacal overlord. Fantastic creatures, powerful magic items, and unexpected allies are out there... waiting to be discovered.

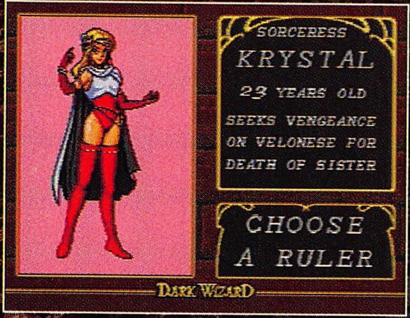
The story is your basic 'save the world' scenario. For dabbling in the dark arts, Velonese is punished by the good wizard Gilliam. Cursed with immortality and imprisoned on an island, he's sentenced to spend his days festering as he watches over the Jewel of Darkness, inside which the evil demon Arliman is sealed. Centuries pass and the aura of the jewel twists Velonese's mind until he becomes a crazy warlord. Using what power he has, Velonese unleashes four demons on the quiet world of Cheshire. Now only the kingdom Quentin remains, standing fast against the surging forces of evil. Can you push back the demons and return Cheshire to its peaceful state?

If you want to save Cheshire, you'll need to use some sound strategy and a lot of brute force. There are four main characters you can choose from, each with his or her own special spells and library of creatures to control, from foot soldiers to unicorns to wyverns. It's vital that you protect your units, because they'll constantly gain levels, as well as change form as they get stronger. If you don't have a sturdy army heading into the final stages, you'll be cut to ribbons.

The bulk of the action revolves around the battles. *Dark Wizard* is one of those 'hexagonal' strategy games. Each unit has a movement range, attack range, and set number of vulnerable spots. The vulnerability of any unit is based on how many of the six sides of its hex are not adjacent to a friendly unit. Learning how to minimize your openings is key, whether it be by terrain, friendly units, or distance from the enemy.

The battle system should be well familiar to any strategy fan. What sets *Dark Wizard* apart from others of its ilk is the fact that the action outside of battles can be just as interesting as the fighting. When not in the heat of battle, you'll be traveling from town to town, solving mysteries and piecing

"...pick up a sword and lead...armies across a continent in an attempt to thwart the plans of a maniacal overlord..."

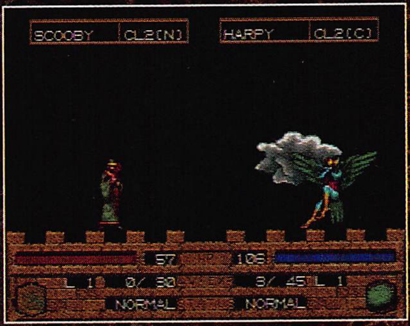


















WIZARD

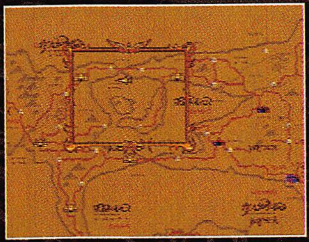


together information in an attempt to track down items, allies, and answers. This was one of the first games where I actually needed a pen and paper to keep all the facts straight. If you forget some vital clue, it can take hours to track down the person you want to speak with...

Watch your units evolve, equip and customize, do some detective work, and, most enjoyable of all, match wits with those on the battlefield. *Dark Wizard* is a standout example of one of the most solid genres in gaming, and it still holds up today. Who says Sega CD didn't have some great games? J

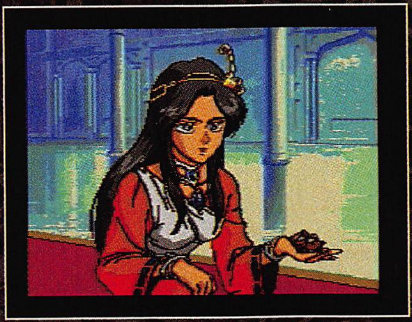




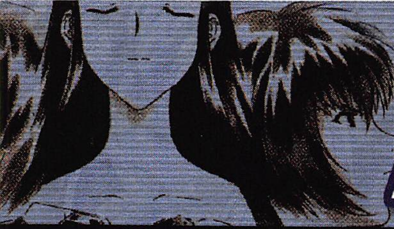












AnimeFan

ANIME.MANGA.J-MUSIC.ASIAN LIVE ACTION.OTAKU CULTURE

Two things are missing from this issue that I promised last issue. No Taniguchi feature. There wasn't time to fully work it out, and in order to do it and do it right, I've pushed it to next issue. The other is the news update I briefly mentioned. There has yet to be a fully final outcome, so until there is, mentioning it will be of no use. Now that that is out of the way, the ***X-Men*** movie. I am NOT a fan of the comic, and I've always HATED Wolverine. However... this is an awesome movie, and not only did it leave me actually liking the ***X-Men*** (at least their movie form), it made me REALLY like Wolverine (again, at least his movie form). As many times as Hollywood screws up such a project, and usually turns it into a joke, ***X-Men*** really stands as a well-crafted movie. Next movie? Give us Psylocke and Gambit!

- shidoshi@gamefan.com

ANIMEFAN | SPECIAL | FEATURE STORY

ANIME EXPO
COSPLAY SCRAPBOOK

Eggo had a chance to attend ***Anime Expo 2000***, and he passed along these pics to me. The winner(s) of the CosPlay competition were the people in the first picture, the mobster family from ***Laputa***. Most popular, however, seems to have been the... chair. Yes, a chair. Don't ask me, I still don't understand. Anyhow, I know none of these people, but here are some shots from the show.



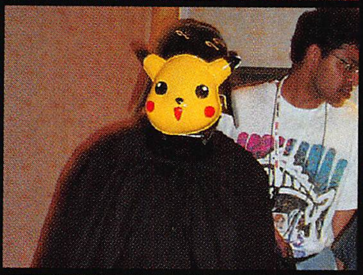




















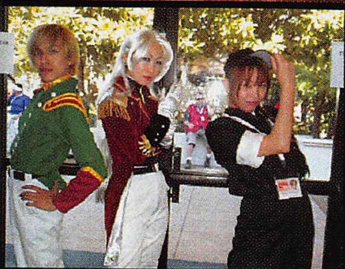








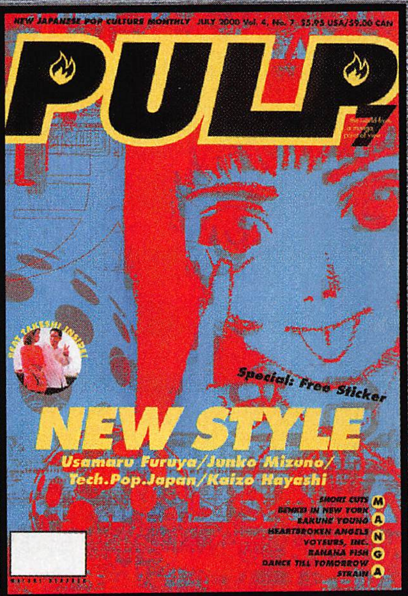






PULP v4 n7

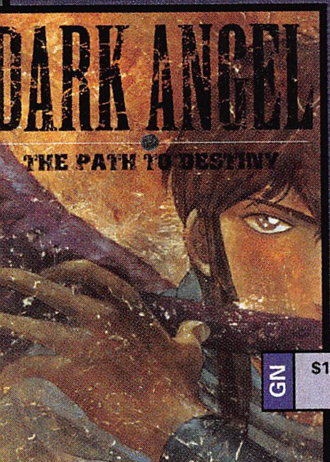
ANT — $5.95 • Anthology • Viz — 18+ • 220 pgs • US — **B+**



Welcome to the all-new ***Pulp***. What exactly IS the all new ***Pulp***? Or, if you're new to ***Pulp***, what IS ***Pulp***? ***Pulp*** could be called the "older sister" to Viz's other manga anthology publication (and favorite read of shidoshi's), ***Animerica Extra***. ***Pulp***, however, is geared more towards "mature" readers as it contains "mature" manga titles—anything from sex to violence to comedy in bad taste. Noting ever totally overboard or graphic, but still not the type of manga you want to give to your younger siblings. Anyhow, as of the most recent issue, ***Pulp*** has been given a facelift. While not as extreme as the change when ***Manga Vizion*** became ***Animerica Extra***, it is still certainly worth noting. The first thing you'll notice is that the new issue of ***Pulp*** is thick—REALLY thick. Growing in size from 128 pages to 220 pages (yet still selling for $5.95), it feels WONDERFUL to hold a US manga anthology that is this thick. Really, really wonderful. Of course, now I want to see ***AniEx*** this thick as well. ****heh**** So what do we get from the extra 100 pages? First we get two new manga titles—***Short Cuts*** (a great manga that looks at pop culture) and ***Benkei in New York*** (which seems to be a "bad deeds come back to haunt people" series similar to the recently released ***Petshop of Horrors***). I like both titles, and they are great additions to ***Pulp***. The currently running manga benefit from the boost in pages, of course, as there is now more room to run more pages for each. The remaining amount of room is filled out by a new smattering of features, stories, reviews, and other articles on different aspect of Japan and its culture. I'm still not a fan of a few of the manga titles, but I love ***Dance till Tomorrow***, I like the new stuff, and there's enough now in ***Pulp*** to keep me coming back. I really like what Viz has done with this one. ***- shidoshi***

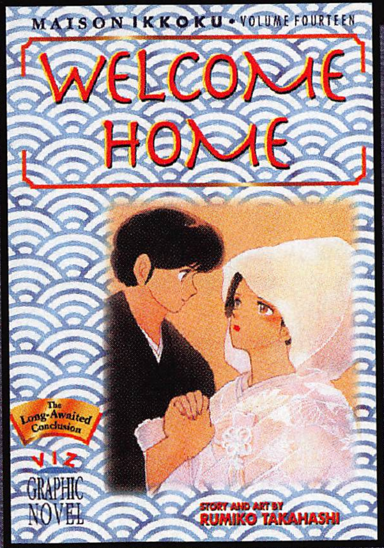
DARK ANGEL
1: THE PATH TO DESTINY

Throughout my life as an anime fan, it was always great when I had the chance to pick up a copy of ***NewType*** and get a look at a host of anime titles I had never heard of before. Throughout the years, I've come to know two different manga stories thanks to their running in the pages of ***NewType***: ***Five Star Stories*** and ***Dark Angel***. Now, thanks to CPM Manga, I, and the rest of the US manga fans out there, are able to enjoy ***Dark Angel***. One of the most popular titles from Kia Asamiya (***Silent Mobius***, ***Steam Detectives***, ***Nadesico***), ***DA*** is the story of Dark, a young swordsman who suddenly becomes the new Phantom Saint of the Red Phoenix, one of four legendary warriors. With this newfound title and power comes not only a lot of responsibility, but also a great legacy to live up to. Even as this is a graphic novel, ***Dark Angel 1*** only scratches the surface of the tale of Dark and his adventures. Thus, I can only judge the story on what little we have been given. So far, ***DA*** seems like a series with great potential—a pleasing fantasy tale with interesting and attractive character. I look forward to seeing where this series goes from here, but for now, I'd recommend ***Dark Angel*** for anyone looking for a great new fantasy manga to get lost in. ***- shidoshi***



GN — $15.95 • Fantasy • CPM Manga — 13+ • 200 pg • US — **B**

MAISON IKKOKU
14: WELCOME HOME



GN — $16.95 • Rom Comedy • Viz — 13+ • 246 pg • US — **A-**

Well, here we are ... the end of ***Maison Ikkoku***. Of course, how much can I say about what happens in these final pages that won't spoil the ending? But then again, anyone who is a fan of the series already knows what will happen in the end, right? While I've never been a huge far of Rumiko Takahashi's other more popular works (***Ranma 1/2***, ***Urusei Yatsura***), I've loved ***Maison Ikkoku*** from the first time I was introduced to it. ***MI*** is a nice, simple, well crafted story that builds a wonderfully engrossing tale around its main characters. We went along for the ride as Godai and Kyoko struggled to realize their feelings for each other, and then tried to come together as everything else in the world worked hard to keep them apart. We were given a story that showed that love isn't an easy thing, and that sometimes it seems to take forever before that love has a chance to really grow and be nurtured into something more. Thankfully, the final chapters of ***MI*** are everything that they should be, and while the story is indeed an emotional roller-coaster ride all the way up to the very end, the final moments tie up the fourteen-volume manga series perfectly. All good things in life, of course, must end, but ***Maison Ikkoku*** was an enchanting tale until its very last page. A fitting farewell to an unforgettable series. ***- shidoshi***

COWBOY BEBOP 3



DVD | Comedy • TV (4 eps) • Bandai 13+ • 100 min • Sub | Dub | **A-**

The problem with many an anime TV series is that, while it may start out great, as the show goes on it beings to lose some of its focus and fanfare. ***Cowboy Bebop***, however, not only escapes this curse, but seems to do so with ease. While many of the episodes do stand on their own, none of them feels like filler the creators came up with to spread out the series. Each show is as good as the last, with its own purpose and charm. Even though main story underplots only pop up every now and then, ***CB*** still feels like it is one big whole, and not a serious of random stories that could be put together in any order. As well, one has to wonder just how much of a budget this show was given. Animation and art quality are still at great levels fourteen episodes in, and Yoko Kanno's soundtrack still infuses that extra ounce of character. We then have a top-notch DVD job to give all of this a solid foundation. ***CB***'s great art is presented in rich, clear quality, and Bandai once again included pieces of Session #0 to give us a short but sweet selection of extras. This is one of those titles that just HAS to be on DVD—VHS just couldn't do it or your experience with the show justice—and the DVD release we get doesn't disappoint. Picking up ***Cowboy Bebop*** should already be one of your top priorities, but when you do, do it right and pick up the DVD. Oh, and Ed rocks! More Ed! ***- shidoshi***



AMAZING NURSE NANAKO I

Let's see how well I can describe the plot here. First we've got Dr. Kyoji Ogami, a young and very talented surgeon, scientist, and bio-engineer. When a group formed from the superpowers of the world needs help with a powerful new weapon, they call upon the services of Dr. Ogami. But, for some reason, they also take a large interest in his spunky housekeeper, Nanako Shichigusa. What do they want with Nanako, and even if they don't end up getting her for themselves, can she survive the sadist tendencies of Dr. Ogami?

Amazing Nurse Nanako is... fanservice. Sure, there is an actual, fully developed anime here. Still, deep in your heart, the feelings that its main goal is indeed fanservice just can't be dismissed. The show is fun, it's cute, it's spirited, and it's BIZARRE. Nanako, our adorable and ****cough**** well-endowed heroine tries her best, but she's klutzy and prone to getting into unfortunate situations. To make things worse, her boss, Dr. Ogami, seems to take pleasure from making her life miserable. He can be quite cruel, and I actually felt sorry for poor Nanako. A few things about this DVD release really stand out to me. The video quality is completely stunning. Yes, I know, I've said that countless times about Pioneer releases. Still, it has yet to stop impressing me. I mean, the show looks REALLY good. As well, Pioneer went with a different, thicker, more shadowed style of subtitles for this release, and I think they are far, far better than the skinnier subtitles they have been using lately. The packaging looks nice and catches your attention, but it was the DVD menus that really blew me away. I am so in love with the menus here—they are simple, elegant, and beautifully designed. Pioneer not only is the king of DVD transfers, but DVD menus as well.

I honestly don't know what to really think about ***Amazing Nurse Nanako***. I mean, it's not bad, but I'm not sure that I'm a fan of the show, and it's really strange, but in a weird way, and not even the "weird strange" I usually go for. "Interesting" is the best way I can describe it. Nanako herself does have charm, but the world around her didn't fully sit right with me. With more episodes, maybe I'll be able to form a better opinion. ***- shidoshi***

DVD | Comedy • OVA • Pioneer 16+ • 60 min • Sub | Dub | **B-**








KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED FOR
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GOLGO 13
THE PROFESSIONAL

VHS | Action • Movie • Urban Vision | 17+ • 90 min • Sub | Dub | **C+**

Duke Togo—the man known to the world as Golgo 13. One of the best hitmen in the entire world. But with a past such as that, at some point a person will want revenge on Golgo 13 for one of his hits. Thus comes the story of industrial tycoon Leonard Dawson. After Golgo 13 assassinates his son, Dawson becomes obsessed with thoughts of payback. Duke finds himself in for the fight of his life as Dawson uses his vast riches to pull out every stop to kill Golgo 13 one and for all—including calling on the services of top US officials and convicted criminals.

Be it known that Mr. Duke Togo is the man. I mean it, seriously—THE MAN. There is no one else in the anime world as cool as he is, no one else as deadly and suave and hardcore. So I have no issue with the man or the tales of his adventures. Unfortunately, his first anime—*Golgo 13: the Professional*—has not quite fared the test of time as well as the man himself. Even though I have a deep appreciation for older anime titles, the art and animation presented here (including the awful CG) are a little too old school even for me. I'd love to see this movie redone with a bit of a more modern look and feel to it. The dub—the retained Streamline one—is like a lot of their other dubs from those days. To be honest, it's not repulsive, but it also won't win any awards. The one problem I did have was with Duke's voice; he sounds a bit too "normal, everyday Joe" to me. The core parts of this anime—the story, the characters—are still good, but unfortunately the show as a whole has lost much of its shine over the years.

Duke Togo is still Duke Togo, so of course that is enough to make this show worth watching. I usually try to look past a show's age, because there is so much more that makes a good anime good, but unfortunately age is indeed a factor here. I'm glad to see Urban Vision bringing *the Professional* back from the grave so that fans have another chance to pick it up, but the show just doesn't have the impact that it once had. *- shidoshi*

GASARAKI
VOLUME 1

VHS | Drama • TV (4 eps) • ADV | 12+ • 100 min • Sub | Dub | **B**

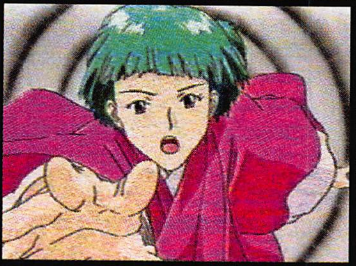
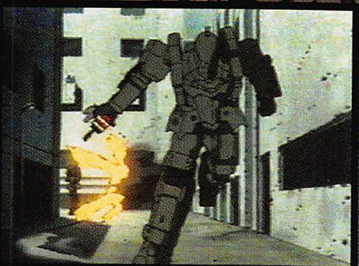


I've been looking forward to checking out *Gasaraki* more than I probably would normally, thanks to my getting into *Faselei* (the UK English release baby!) for the NGPC. That game has given me more interest in the "normal mecha" genre (as opposed to the "big, flash robot" genre), and this is exactly the route that ADV's latest release takes. *Gasaraki* is the story of a battle between two forces that breaks out in the Middle Eastern country of Beglinstan. The Gowa family has provided the Japanese Defense Forces with a brand new prototype of Tactical Armor, which is sent to Beglinstan so that Japan can show up other countries in military power. However, reports come out that Beglinstan has a deadly new form of TA of their own. The war is increased with the involvement of two mysterious people—Yushiro and Miharu—who both hold the ability to call upon a powerful and mystical force.

Anime made for television usually looks like an anime made for television, but sometimes a series stands out due to a higher feeling of production. *Gasaraki*, for me, fits into this category. The series looks and feels great—you never really get the sense that any portion of the show is really lacking. The show also feels down to earth, with no real examples of going too far in character designs or plotlines in order to attract more viewers. The mecha designs follow this same sense—they are low-key and more realistic in design, yet still look classy and interesting. When you pack in a consistently outstanding dub, *Gasaraki* shows itself as a great choice for anyone looking for a more serious mecha drama. If the show has one major downfall, I think it throws too much at the viewer too soon. Without a strong introduction to the characters, which sides they are on, and the basics of the storyline, I was almost completely flying blind through these first four episodes. I've honestly not felt so unbelievably lost and clueless as to what was going on in a series in a long time. This is a trend I'm really starting to dislike in anime, especially post-*Evangelion*—making a series seem more intriguing and mysterious by leaving EVERYTHING to be explained over time.

If you have the patience and capacity to sort out what is going on in *Gasaraki*, it seems like a series that will be worth the ride. Heavy on plot and politics, some will no doubt find this show slow and boring. For those of us who get a bit tired of everything having to be full-on sensory overload, *Gasaraki* gives us a nice alternative.
- shidoshi



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1993

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PANDA! GO PANDA!

DVD	Family • OAV • Pioneer 3+ • 75 min • Sub / Dub	A

AnimeFan Best of the Issue!

When Mimiko finds herself living alone after her grandmother must go away on a trip, she isn't scared or worried in the least. After arriving home from the train station, she finds a peculiar thing behind her house—a baby panda. Mimiko learns the panda's name is Panny, and that his much larger father isn't far behind. No longer alone, Mimiko now finds herself adopted into this panda family as both a mother for Panny and a daughter for Papa Panda.

So where does ***Panda! go Panda!*** come from? Well, what if I were to tell you that it was an original concept by Hayao Miyazaki (you'd better know that name by now), and directed by Isao Takahata (the director of ***Grave of the Fireflies*** and ***Only Yesterday***)? Yes, with two names behind it like those, I was ready to watch without knowing anything about what I was going to see. Watching ***PgP***, it's amazing to see just how much of a precursor this is to ***My Neighbor Totoro***. You've got the young girl taken in by a creature of the forest, and you've got Papa Panda who has an amazing similarity to Totoro (there's just no question of the comparison when he smiles). So, while this is a great little show, it's also interesting on another level when you're also familiar with ***Totoro***. Now, don't take that to mean that ***PgP*** isn't good on its own, because it is. Unquestionably. This is another brilliant anime title that all ages can enjoy, yet isn't insulting for either younger or older viewers. I love the artwork done for this show, as it has that wonderful older anime look and charm to it. Voices are great across both language tracks, and I was very impressed at how much the English Papa Panda sounds like his Japanese counterpart. And, again, quality DVD transfer and menus from Pioneer.

I'm a big supporter of any anime releases in the US that are outside of the typical "popular" genres, especially when it is a great, high quality family title. The more titles like ***Panda! Go Panda!*** we get, the less we are forced to rely on giving our kids Disney titles as entertainment. This is an endearing title that will make even the coldest of people smile from its charm and silliness. This is a wonderful viewing choice for anyone—anime fan or not—of all ages, unless this kind of stuff really isn't your thing. It's okay, though, there's nothing wrong with being heartless and stuffy. ****laughs**** ***- shidoshi***

IRRESPONSIBLE CAPTAIN TYLOR OVA I

VHS	Comedy • OVA • Right Stuf 13+ • 90 min • Sub / Dub	B

On the sides of the United Planet Space Force and the Raalgon Empire, the guns are quiet. The war, at least temporarily, has stopped. But something is amiss behind the lines of the Raalgon: the development of a new weapon. A new, powerful bomb which can eat its way inside of a ship's force shield and do extreme damage. Before the Raalgon Empire can have the chance to install these new bombs on all of their warships, someone must stop them. Enter Justy Ueki Tylor and the ship he commands, the Soyokaze. Tylor is called to a secret meeting where he is given an even more secret task, one that he cannot even explain to the members of his crew. The Soyokaze joins the rest of the UPSF fleet to destroy a convoy carrying the new bombs, but Tylor has an attack plan of his own. Of course, like most of his plans, things go wrong, and the crew of the Soyokaze are captured.

As much as I hate to say it, ***Irresponsible Captain Tylor OVA: An Exception Episode*** just didn't do it for me. I liked the TV show thanks to its wacky sense of humor, and the Inspector Gadget-esque way that Tylor always seemed to come out the hero even when he had no idea what was going on. With this OVA, however, little of that was to be found here. This is certainly one of those cases where a light-hearted and comedic show is given a more serious, more character-driven push when it moves from television series to OVAs or movies. Sometimes that works, sometimes that doesn't. For me, here with ***Tylor***, it doesn't. I understand the reason for the change: while I've gotten countless responses from people who couldn't stand ***Tenchi Forever*** because it was so different than the rest of the series, I loved and praised the movie for exactly that reason. This time, though, it just didn't click for me. That's not to say that this OVA is flawed from the start. For the most part, I had little complaint with the core element that we are presented here. Good or bad, this does feel like your typical "anime movie" (without the budget of an anime movie). The story has good build-up, there is a nice amount of character interaction, and we get a complete tale that has a good length and doesn't feel rushed or like it is missing out on key elements. There are times that I felt some of the characters were just going through the paces, doing little to break out from their typical roles, but how many other anime titles can be blamed for the same thing?

So, while the first volume of the ***Tylor*** OVA series didn't do it for me, that doesn't mean that you won't like it. While the wacky humor has been toned down, the basic elements of ***Tylor*** are still here, and Tylor is still Tylor. ***- shidoshi***





SHIDOSHI'S TRIP TO JAPAN

Before I talk about Japan, I want to say something about my pictures. Due to human error (or, more specifically, shidoshi error), 50 of the 75 pictures I took in Japan ended up being no good. Of course, I was slightly upset over that. *heh* What it means, though, is that most of the great pics I took to print here in AnimeFan—pics of anime and manga shops and various aspects of life in Japan—I now can't show you. So, if you find the collection of shots that I chose for this feature a bit strange, that's why.







Anyhow, my trip. The twelve hour flight to Japan is easier than you might think, and harder than you might think. Being stuck not only in one place, but one seat, for that long of time isn't easy. As well, flying at that altitude can make some people feel ill (as it did for me). I lucked out on the flight there when I was bumped up to heaven... I mean, business class. The way back, no such luck. You would think that international flights wouldn't have such cramped seats. You would be wrong.

This was my first experience out of the country. Let me tell you, going to a country that is so different than the one you are used to is a HUGE culture shock. I mean, unlike places such as England or Australia, there is almost nothing familiar in Japan. There were many times when I was the only non-Japanese person for miles, I didn't really speak the language, the food was totally different, almost everything was new for me. Culture shock is a very hard thing to get over, no matter how hard you try.

I got the chance to do a decent bit of travelling, checking out Osaka, Kyoto, a slight bit of Kobe, and down to Kagawa. Travel is wonderful in Japan, as the train and bus systems are excellent. If you need to get somewhere, you can get there, and small "towns" have built up around the different stations. Be ready to have cash, though—Japan is expensive. Those convenient vending machines may be everywhere, but your typical can of Coke (which tastes little like Coke in the US) will cost you $1.20. It's about the same for everything else, but as Japanese people are used to prices like that, they don't flinch when shelling out cash. Typical cheapo American that I am, I was often a bit shocked at how much I paid for things.

Checking out anime shops made me really realize something—we have it GOOD in the US. Some people may complain that anime is expensive over here, but it is nothing compared to Japan. Where we may pay $30 for a couple OVA episodes on one VHS tape, you might pay $40 or more for ONE of those episodes of the same series in Japan. DVD is still trying to catch up, but I was surprised at just how much of it I did see. A number of titles are now coming out on DVD, and there were DVD box sets galore. At the same time, LD may be on the way out, but it isn't giving up easily. Almost everywhere that I saw anime, I saw anime on LD.

Manga shops are, in a word, awesome. Think of your local decent-sized bookstore. Now think of that as being ALL manga. Those kinds of shops weren't unusual, and seeing that much manga all in one place was enough to make you believe the common otaku myth that, "In Japan, EVERYONE reads manga!" I could have spent hours just looking through what was there, discovering countless manga titles we have yet to get (and probably never will) in the US.

Unfortunately, I don't have the room here to really go into depth about my trip to Japan. So, if you have an internet connection of some sort, check out ***AnimeFan Online***! By the time you read this, my full report will be available on there, and you can learn a lot about all of the aspects of Japan I got to experience. It was a trip I will never forget, and one that I really hope I'll make again. It's a hard trip (especially if you aren't fluent in the language and culture), but the experience and memories I was given were more than worth it. And hey, I got the chance to see more girls in "sailor" school uniforms then I thought I would EVER see in my life. *heh* - *shidoshi*









Hocus Pocus

codes, hints & strategies



Welcome to the pages of cheats, codes, and hints galore!!! Upon these leaves you will find all the assistance you'll need for the hottest games today. Not satisfied? Need help on another game? No problem! If you need codes or hints on any game, mail GameFan, or e-mail hocuspocus@gamefan.com. Now, travel with thy controller in hand, to a place where cheaters prosper...

Marvel vs. Capcom 2

Capcom's latest spaz fest is by far the craziest. Every single fighter ever to make an appearance in a cross-over/versus game is in the mix and ready for battle. Two-on-two battles have been changed to three-on-three battle royales. Special Partners have been replaced with real team members than can be called at anytime without limitation or switched in. We've amassed an illustrative list of the Special Partner attacks as well as some tasty combos.

Special Partner Attacks

Each fighter is capable of entering battle temporarily to help his teammate. To do this press the L or R shoulder button. One of your two teammates will hop into the battle and clock the opposition. Each form, A, B or Y has a different attack as well as super during team mode.

Special thanks to Eddie Kim and the Southern Hills Golfland crew for regularly kicking my ass.

Special Partner Attacks

Akuma



Amingo



Anakaris



B.B.Hood



Blackheart



Cable



Cammy



Captain America



Capt. Commando



Charlie



Chun Li



Colossus



Cyclops



Dan



Special Partner Attacks

Dhalsim



Doctor Doom



Felicia



Gambit



Guile



Hayato



Hulk



Iceman



Iron Man



Jill



Jin



Juggernaut



Ken



Magneto



Special Partner Attacks

Marrow



M.Bison



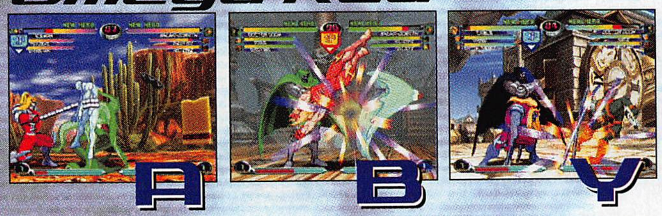
MegaMan



Morrigan



Omega Red



Psylocke



Rogue



Roll



Ruby Heart



Ryu



Sabertooth



Sakura



Sentinel



Servbot



Special Partner Attacks

Shuma Gorath



Silver Samurai



SonSon



Spiderman



Spiral



Storm



Strider



Thanos



Tron



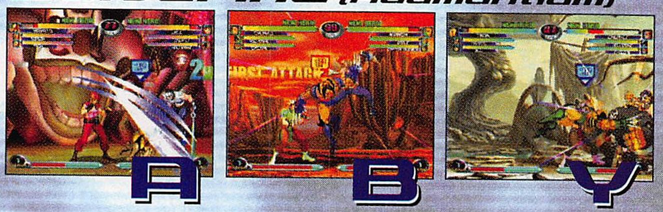
Venom



War Machine



Wolverine (Adamantium)



Wolverine (Bone)



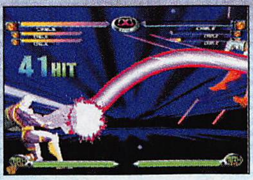
Zangief

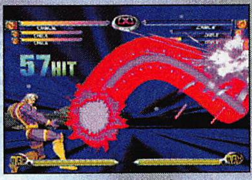


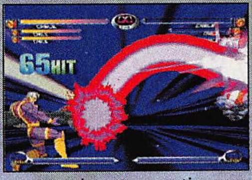
Combos Combos Combos


Begin with Cable's aerial Super move (Quarter-circle forward with two


Punches) against an air-borne opponent Here's where the fun


begins, repeat.... ....and again...


...and yet again....


...and one more time.

Cable


Begin with a crouching Light Kick (A)


Then a crouching Hard Punch (Y)


Follow upwards with an aerial Light Punch (X)


Then a Light Kick (A)


Continue with a Medium Punch (X)

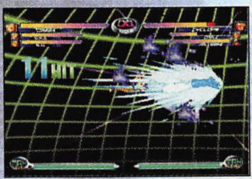

Now press X again for another Light Punch

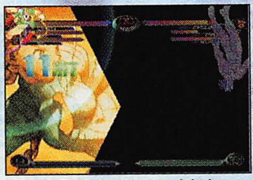

Followed by a Medium Punch (X)

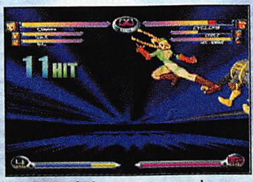

Repeat step 3


Repeat step 4


Repeat step 5


Perform an aerial Drill Kick


And finish them with her


aerial super attack


and watch the


damage rack up.

Cammy


Begin with the Captain's patented Super (Quarter-circle forward with two Kicks)

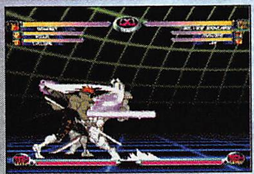

As the opponent lands attack with a crouching Light Kick (A)

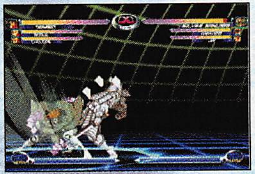

Then a standing Hard Kick (B)


Immediately press L and R for a level 2 super


Look at all the hits ^_^

Captain Commando


Start off with a Card throw


Into a Royal Flush


Let the hits rack up before you...


...Call in Rogue with her Super attack


(Quarter-circle forward with two punches)


Let the hits rack up again


And again....


And finish with Cyclops (Quarter-circle forward with two kicks)


He'll do a good amount of damage...


If you can aim.

Gambit

Combos Combos Combos

Guile


Attack with a Dash-in standing Light Punch (X)

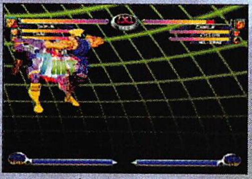

Then a standing Medium Punch (X)


Followed by a crouching Hard Punch (Y)


Pursue the opponent in the air with an aerial Light


Punch (X)...


Then a Light Kick (A)


An another Medium Punch (X)


Followed by a Medium Kick (A)...


Into Guile aerial Flash (Quarter-circle forward with two kicks)


Isn't it pretty?

Hulk


Here's an easy one... crouching Light Kick (A)


Then a crouching Hard Punch (Y)


Into Bruce's Super move (Quarter-circle forward with two punches)

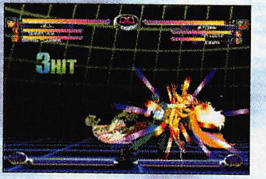

For a ton of... Extra hits....



Jill


Call Jill's Zombie (Quarter-circle backwards with Light Kick)

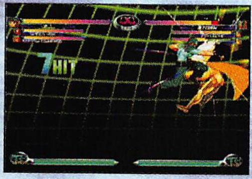

When he grabs your opponent dash in with a standing Light Punch (X)


Then a standing Medium Punch (X)....


Into a crouching Hard Punch (Y)


Once you're up above press X again for another Light Punch


And press A for a Light Kick...


Then A again for a Medium Punch...


But, wait, there's more—perform her special move


(Quarter-circle forward with a punch)


Into her Super Attack (Quarter-circle forward


with two punches)


Wheeeee!


This is fun being Thug Tactics!





Ken


Press X to attack with a standing Light Punch...


Follow up with a standing Medium Punch (X)


Then another punch with a standing Hard Punch (Y)...


Hit yet again with Ken's super (Quarter-circle forward with two punches)


Then Chun Li's super (Quarter-circle forward with two punches)

Combos Combos Combos

MegaMan


Charge Rock's Buster by holding down Y for a while....

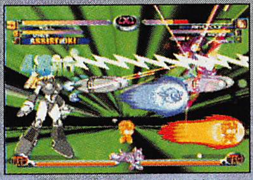

Release the charge and dash in. While the fireball is nailing him...



...Perform a Drill Super (Quarter-circle forward with two kicks)



As Mega's super ends bring in Roll for some more action.


Quarter-circle forward with two punches and it starts again.

Morrigan


Perform an aerial dash and attack with a Light Punch (X)



Then a Light Kick (A)



As you land perform a crouching Light Punch (X)



Then a crouching light Kick (A)



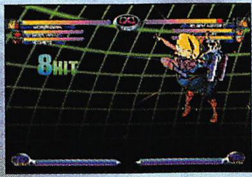
Send them up with a crouching Hard Punch (Y)



In the air press X for another Light Punch



Then press A for an aerial Light Kick



Followed up with a medium Punch (X) into a...

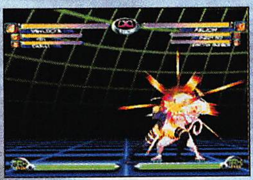


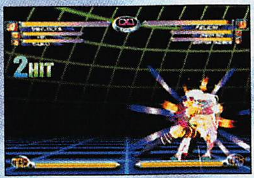
Medium Kick (A) And end it all with her


super (Quarter-circle forward with two kicks)

Psylocke


Here's a no-nonsense combo that does damage—dash in...


...with a standing Light Punch (X)



Then a standing Medium Punch (X)



Now press A for a Medium Kick



Quickly crouch and press Y to send them up



In the air press Light Punch (X)



Then press Light Kick (A)



Continue the combo with a Medium Kick (A)



Then don't let up, attack with a Hard Kick (B), but



press Up with B to send them higher...



Now attack with her Psy Blade (Quarter-circle



forward with X) And again...



Into her Psy Super (Quarter-circle forward



with two Punches) You'll have to aim this one..



Get as much as you can.

Ryu


Here's a boring combo: Press X for a standing Light Punch



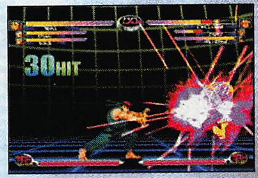
Then press Y for a standing Hard Punch



Do a Hadoken



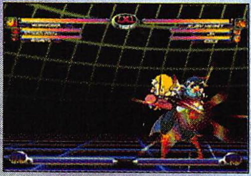
Then a Shinkuu Hadoken (Quarter-circle forward with two punches)



Wow, exciting (note: sarcasm)

Combos Combos Combos

Roll


I have to pay respect to Roll, so jump in with Light Kick (A)



Then press A again for a Medium Kick



On the ground press X for a Light Punch...



Into her launcher, which is Hard Kick (B)



Follow them up and press X for another Light Punch



Into a Light Kick (A)



Don't let up, attack with Medium Kick (A)



One more Medium Punch (A) before you go...

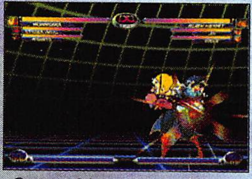


Into Roll's Mega Super (Quarter-circle forward with two punches)



This one requires Eggo-sytle ninja timing.

SonSon


Start with an aerial Dash



Then while still in the air press X for a Light Punch



Then a Light Kick (A)



When you reach the ground press A, three times



To get three...



Hits in on the stool....



Then go into The Monkey's anti-air Dragon Punch wannabe attack



It'll get you a few hits...



Before you end it with her Super



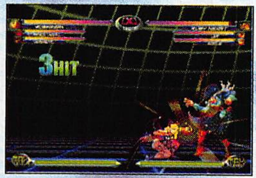
(Quarter-circle forward with two punches)

Spidey


We had to throw in Pete s oldie, but goodie.



Jump with X for a Light Punch



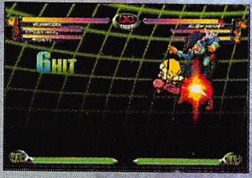
Then a Light Kick (A)



While still up in the air press X for a Medium Punch



When you land do one crouching Light Punch (X)



Then a crouching Medium Kick (A)



Then send them up high with his standing hard Kick (B)



Jump with them and press Light Punch (X) Light Kick (A)....



Strong Punch (X)...



And lastly, Medium Kick (A), you can add a special attack here if you like...

Venom


Grab em with a Hard Punch (Y)



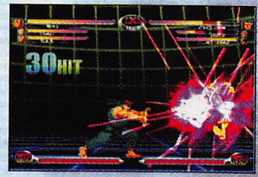
Then press X for a Light Punch



Send up with a Medium Punch (X)



Pursue with a Light Kick, Medium Kick duo (A, A)



And end it with his venom special.

Combos Combos Combos





Advertiser's Index

Spaceworld Speculation

Spaceworld, the Big N's annual showcase of all things Nintendo, is still a month away but reports are already circulating about what games will be there. Here's a preliminary list of titles we expect to see at the event, which takes place in Japan:

Nintendo 64—*Echo Delta*, *Animal Forest*, *Crime & Punishment*, *Mario Party 3*, *Custom Robo V2*, *Mickey's Speedway USA*, *Banjo-Tooie*, *Perfect Dark*, and *Mysterious Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer 2*.

Game Boy Advance—*Mario Kart Advance*, *Kuru Kuru Rin* (Spinning Round and Round), *Ougon No Taiyou* (Golden Sun), and *Napoleon*.

Game Boy Color—*Donkey Kong 2001*, *Legend of Zelda: The Forbidden Fruit*, *Legend of Strafe*, *Pokemon Puzzle League*, *Mysterious Zonaa*, *Tottoko Hamu Taro: Monumental Battle*, *Mario Tennis*.

There are some glaring omissions from the list, but they're probably part of the master plan. As you can see, no Dolphin titles have been announced yet. Nintendo is probably planning to keep all details about its new next-generation system under wraps until the event, making the official announcement all the more special. Noticeably absent from the list of N64 games are *Mother 3* (*Earthbound* in the U.S.) and *Bio Hazard Zero* (*Resident Evil* to us). These are two titles have been at the top of Japanese Most Wanted lists for some time. Could they be shifting platforms from N64 to Dolphin? If the current rumors are true, we could see a glorious return of *Earthbound* on Nintendo's 128-bit system, and hopefully *Bio Hazard Zero* will benefit from a state-of-the-art facelift as well (and maybe we'll see shots where Rebecca is NOT on that train!).

To Star Cube Or Not To Star Cube

Ever since Nintendo of Sweden's website (what, you didn't know Nintendo had a branch in Sweden? Don't feel bad. Most of us didn't either) reported that the name of Nintendo's upcoming console (codenamed Dolphin) would be Star Cube, it seems the industry has gone crazy over this silly little moniker. Just like people flamed Sega for adopting the name "Dreamcast," (doesn't that still conjure up images of a fishing rod?) Nintendo got a ton of flak from people who didn't want to be buying games for Star Cube. Word on the street is that Nintendo's online service is going to be called Star Road as well. So just when everybody starts adjusting to the goofy name Star Cube, rumors start flying the other way that this is **not** going to be the name of Nintendo's 128-bit champion. Could it have been a marketing ploy to see how the name was being received by leaking it early? Unfortunately, we'll have to wait for the official announcement from Nintendo of Japan at Spaceworld next month. Then, we can expect all our Dolphin/Star Cube questions to be answered. On a final note, even if Nintendo does choose Star Cube as the name for its next console, history has proven that we won't care in a few months anyway, as most names tend to grow on you eventually... no matter how bad they are (remember the 3DO?).

Alas Poor Sega, I Knew Him Well...

While this rumor is unconfirmed, it wouldn't surprise us if it ended up being true. Sega is planning to pull out of the arcade business in North America and Europe. Due to declining sales in both these markets, the arcade business is no longer profitable for Sega in North America. Japanese gamers will be the only ones getting great arcade games like *Samba de Amigo 2* (which is in the works), *Spikeout*, and *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram* version *5.66*. As for us, *Star Wars Racer*, *NASCAR Rubbin' Racing*, and *Slashout* could be the last Sega arcade games we see. Hopefully, we'll continue to get ports of Sega's arcade games on Dreamcast (e.g., *Spawn: In The Demon's Hand*, *Crazy Taxi*, and *Bass Fishing*), even if we don't see the originals in the arcade.

Keep Dreaming Of Black & White

If there's one game being hyped to death by our neighbours across the pond in Europe these days, it's Lionhead's much-delayed *Black & White*, coming out for PC and Dreamcast. Both titles are being developed simultaneously, and whilst they were originally scheduled to come out around the same time, it appears the DC version has hit a production snag, as it's been delayed indefinitely. Whilst PC gamers will be playing god on November 10th, DC owners will have to wait a bit longer to play with their peons. The reason cited for the delay? Since the PC version has been delayed as often as Kodomo tries to tell us that "football" is played without using your hands (read, that's often), it's only natural that the DC rev fall behind as well. Plus, it's taking longer to develop for DC than they originally thought. Right! Maybe Peter Molyneux is still scratching his head trying to come up with some gameplay for this labour of love, which so far has displayed only dancing cow models, a satellite zoom feature from outer space, and the ability to slap around villagers with your divine hands. Not exactly the 'revolutionary' title we were hoping for in terms of gameplay? For what it's worth, the Dreamcast rev is supposed to have exclusive characters.

Let Loose The Floodgates

The PS2 is a month away from launch and the games just keep coming and coming, with more titles appearing by the minute. For starters, Eidos is bringing *Tokyo Xtreme Racer 2* to Sony's 128-bitter. Then, we have very vague details of a *Justice League of America* game being worked on. WezAnimtions (a 3D modeling company) posted on its website that it's working on 3D models for a *JLA* game for PS2. No publisher for this game has been announced yet.

Finally, Matt Groening, creator of "The Simpsons" and "Futurama," hinted at the San Diego Comicon that a Futurama game is being planned for a next-generation console. While Fox has the license for "The Simpsons" (note the upcoming *Simpsons Wrestling*), that's not the same as having the "Futurama" license. There's still no publisher announced for this title, but we'll let you know more as soon as we hear it.

Let There Be Lunar... 3!!

GameArts' *Lunar: The Silver Star and Lunar 2: Eternal Blue* ended up being RPG classics released on Sega CD, Saturn, and now PlayStation. The source of a huge cult following and commanding steep prices on eBay, the *Lunar* games are a must-play for RPG enthusiasts. At an Ubi Soft press event in Hawaii, GameArts' Senior Director of Development Takeshi Miyaji was asked about the possibility of seeing another *Lunar* game. He said that he'd like to see the series continue, but could not comment any further. Dare we even hope...?

Hundred Swords Loses Its Edge?

Just as we were going to print we got some bad news in the form of an apparent confirmation that Sega won't be bringing Smile Bit's (of Jet Set Radio fame) newest game, the RTS Hundred Swords to the US. No confirmation as yet as to why, but we're reasonably certain some intrepid 3rd party will brave the rough online waters to bring us some sword-swinging action in time for the end of the year. Activision, Crave, you listening?

Tokyo Extreme Racer Heads to PS2?

And one last tidbit as the ink hits the page, Genki's *Tokyo Extreme Racer 2* is PS2-bound. We're not sure who's publishing it over here yet (a little birdie told me that you just might see Lara tooling around in one of those hot little *TXR* numbers—draw your own conclusions), but be sure that it's coming in the very near-future.

Fury's Tales Of The Hardcore

After just narrowly recovering from my PS2 debacle, I promised myself, my family, the guys at work, Seaman and of course my Rabbi (ok, I'm kidding, I never promised the guys at work anything) that I would avoid blowing my paychecks on ridiculous game related items. But this is way different. Y'see—I had no choice in this situation.



Yup, my hands were definitely tied as I helplessly scoured eBay for the recently released (import only) *Metal Gear Solid 2* DVD trailer. Now some of the guys around these parts would argue that this mere trailer was nothing more than a glorified commercial... but I knew better. This was my opportunity to land an awesome collector's item in preparation of Hideo Kojima's upcoming sequel. Sure, I might have paid seventy bucks for something that sells for fifteen dollars in a Japanese convenient store (appropriately shelved next to the soy milk and dried seaweed paper), but so what? Nothing stopped me from spending five hundred dollars above the store cost of a PS2 (hmm, perhaps that wasn't such a good example... but you get my drift, right?). In an office full of skeptics and naysayers, thankfully I have this one outlet to speak to those stricken by the hardcore bug... you are not alone! So what have I learned from this whole ordeal you might ask? Well, I've learned that unless you want your co-workers making fun of you on a daily basis and using such a situation against you, keep your purchases (**whatever** they may be) to yourself! Until next time, this has been another... *Tale of the Hardcore*. < thanks to John K. Kwok for delivery as promised!>



$70.00

HARDCORE METER
SUBJECT: Fury
USELESS ITEM: *MGS 2* DVD Trailer
NO. OF USES: ? (Like I really need to supply more ammo for these guys (sheesh...)

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

"The point of a review should be to embrace the sentiments and viewpoints of as many people as possible. Failure to do so is negligent and unprofessional."
—CoreMagazine.com, responding to reader's letters regarding their *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram* review.

If that first sentence doesn't make your stomach churn, it should. It's absolutely ludicrous, and it shows once again that far too people know what a review is these days. The dictionary definition of a review is "To write or give a critical report on" something. That means your job as a reviewer is to give your opinion on a product. MAKE judgements, critique it, pick it apart... but make sure you're giving us YOUR opinion and not somebody else's. Why? Because you're not somebody else! You'll never catch us saying, "Fans of RPG's will like *Final Fantasy VIII*." Instead, we gave you what we thought of the game, and judging from the feedback, many of you disagreed with us. But that's fine. Our job as reviewers is not to sit around a table conducting imaginary polls such as "Do you think most of our readers like this game?" That's completely ridiculous... and (dare I say it?) unprofessional.

On another note, we're pretty ticked off that 99.9% of *VOOT* reviews out there read like this: "This game is gorgeous... yada yada yada... arcade perfect home port... but without the Twin Sticks, it's unplayable." First off, the majority of people writing these reviews have never played the arcade version of *VOOT* (there were less than 10 machines in the U.S. last we checked), and the DC version is NOT arcade perfect. DC *VOOT* is a great looking game, but the characters and textures are completely different from the Model 3 Step 2 arcade game. Secondly, if you people had a hard-core bone in your body (big "if," I know) and actually played the game in-depth, you'd find that the Dreamcast pad is not bad as a controller. The button scheme is intuitive and jump-cancelling (which is the primary way you should keep the enemy in your sights) is actually faster on the pad. Also, it's much easier to perform certain moves (such as a crouching dash) on the pad, as opposed to the Twin Sticks. Granted, there are moves such as Cypher's flying which are handled much better on the Twin Sticks, but playing *VOOT* on a pad is not as horrible a prospect as our peers would have you believe.



One of the less-publicized perks of working in this young industry is you get a sneak peek at all the toys coming out before everyone else does.

BBI, a new division of Blue Box Toys is coming out with action figures from the games *Legend of Dragoon* and *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*. Each of these babies stands tall at a towering 7" sans full-body weapon. Eggo, wipe up that spittle. It's unbecoming of you. To learn more, check out the website at http://www.blueboxtoys.com.





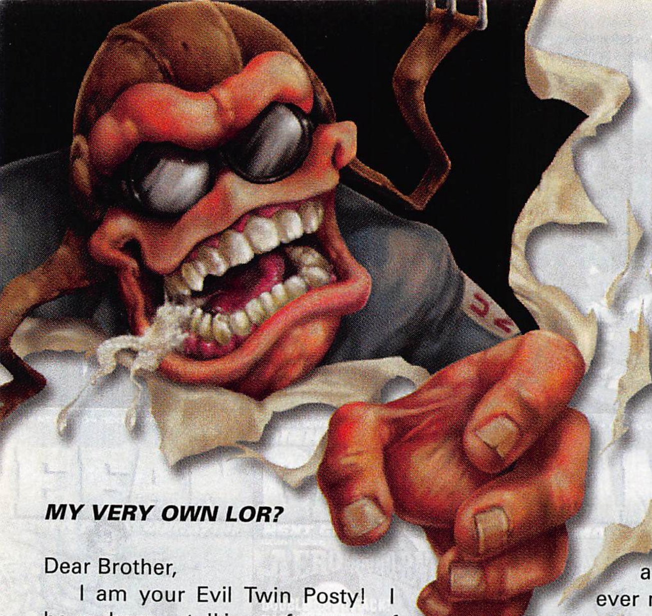






You've played the game... you've played the card battle game... you've seen the television show. If you're that much of a psycho (as we are), then you might as well play the real-life *Monster Rancher* collectible card game by Artbox. This company also has a website which can be found at this location: http://www.artboxent.com.





THE POSTMEISTER

Write to me, I'm running for president!!!
The Postmeister
6301 DeSoto Avenue Suite E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

MY VERY OWN LOR?

Dear Brother,

I am your Evil Twin Posty! I have been stalking after you for years, watching you make a successful life as a "Postmeister." Sorry to say I live in a cardboard box, but I am on the verge of world domination! Join me brother or perish in the Reckoning that is to come! Let's say our 2 worlds may have to have a gaming war of all time to save your puny world! MUAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!! Mother always said you were the favorite...

Farewell my Brother... for now.

Evil Posty

Dear Evil Posty,

I never knew I had a brother. I must admit though, I was a little suspicious when mom would always take that tray of fish heads and Twinkies up into the attic on Wednesdays. Then there were always those bumping noises up there at night. Well, we solved that little childhood mystery. Bummer you were always locked up there. You missed all of the big birthday parties with the clowns and ponies, not to mention the $100 a week allowances and Olympic-sized pool in the backyard. You might have really enjoyed those things...

Be forewarned brother (are you a twin or my older brother?) that taking over the world is no easy task. Just ask Brain; he and Pinky have been at it for years and have yet to succeed. Besides, doing it through gaming showdowns may be a bit more of an arduous road than say, using armed troops. I however, want no part in your schemes for, absolute power corrupts absolutely and I am a decent fellow (for the most part).

SICK, WITH LOVE

Posty,

You guys at GameFan kick so much ass it sickens me. First off before I ask a few questions I'd just like to add that the best games are 2D, no argument (well maybe some games are [exceptions]: Mario Tennis, Ridge Racer, etc.). Anyways I will cut to the chase:

Question 1: What are your 5 greatest games of all time?(ECM's?)

Question 2: Can you name a few of the hardest games ever made? (great/actual playable ones, must conquer all)

Question 3: Does the X-Box make you want to puke?

thanx,
Bane from Weaponlord
a.k.a. Derek

Dear Derek,

Instead of taking up space in Posty to let ECM rant about what his favorite games are and what are the most difficult, I say just wait until GameFan compiles its "Best Of" lists, later this year. Considering that ECM refuses to compromise on what these may be, you can bet that the list will actually be "ECM's Best Of." If my vote counts though, I would have to say that Viewpoint *and* Shipwreckers *were two of the toughest.*

At no time, during the past year, has the X-Box ever induced vomiting, projectile or otherwise. I, in fact, am more excited about its release than any other system's.

IF WE HAD FOUND KAZAAM...

Hey G-post,

I have a very good question for you and the rest of the staff of GameFan. If you all had three wishes what would they be?

MG Loco
a.k.a. Mark Gascon
Chicago, IL

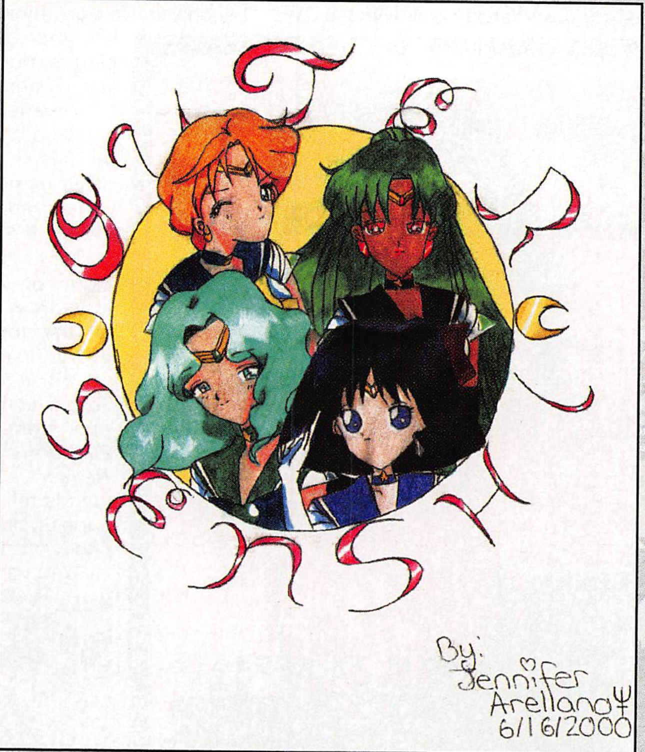
Interesting question. After asking all of the writers what they would wish for, I set out to ponder what I, Posty, would ask. The first would be for all the children of the world to come together and sing in peace and harmony. Next, I wish, I wish I was a fish. Finally, and most important, I would wish that some movie studio would bring together Dolf Lundgren, Howie Long, Roddy Piper and The Boz to star in an ensemble action-comedy buddy cop movie where they must battle an evil tyrant (played by Jan-Michael Vincent). The movie would feature at least one one-liner per 5 minutes, 75 explosions, a body count of no less than 600 and no fewer than 10 shots of gratuitous nudity.

Upon seeing the wish lists of the other editors, it occurred to me that none of their wishes were particularly interesting and made no mention of The Boz or nudity.

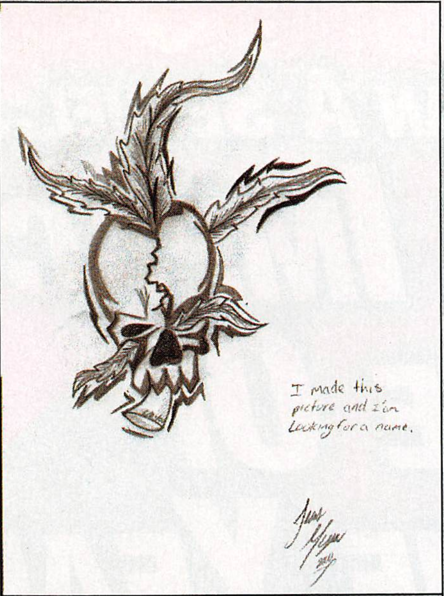
BUDDING ARTISTE?

Dear Posty,

I don't have much to say so this will be short. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE put my drawing in one of your issues. It is the will of my friend Shin Gouki. He was the one who urged me to send a drawing. Also, if you ever need another magazine



Jennifer's best rendition of Sailor Moon or Shidoshi's last 4 "girlfriends"? You be the judge.



Jesus Mejia of Commerce, CA is looking for a name for his drawing. I think he should call it "Skull With Leaves and Stuff Growing Out Of It" but maybe you could come up with a better name. If you have any ideas, let me know and I will put them in a later issue.

artist, I'll be able to work in a couple of years (I'm 14 now)! Be expecting more of me in the future.

Jennifer Arellano
San Bernardino, CA

Dear Jennifer,

How could I not include your drawing? A woman of few words who bends to the will of men is always ok in my book. No, seriously though, I am a sucker for any letters that have all of their 'i's dotted with little hearts [office-wide "awwwwwww" inserted here]. And expect more of you later? Hell, Eggo is absolutely counting on it!

DESTINED FOR GREATNESS

Dear Posty,

I have a problem and I need your help! Two years ago I failed 6th grade because of my PlayStation habit. [Last year] I failed again and my mom hammered my PlayStation (literally). I only have a Super Nintendo and four games to play [now]. My parents won't let me get a PlayStation and the reason I need it is to find out [what is going on] outside of *Final Fantasy: Mystic Quest, Secret of Evermore, Mario RPG* and *Zelda*. Is the PlayStation going extinct? Could you tell me where I could get *Final Fantasy 2 & 3* (the American version), *Ogre Battle, Tactics Ogre* and *Chrono Trigger*? At least I passed 6th grade this year...

Ryan Taylor
Orwell, OH

Dear Ryan,

While I think the last thing you need is information on where to buy more RPGs, I will tell you that all of these games you seek can easily be found on the internet or in your local game shop (assuming it isn't some weaksauce establishment). Although, it will be harder to come by Tactics Ogre for the SNES *since it was never released here.*

I am not sure how one fails the 6th grade unless you are Billy Madison. Nonetheless, I am glad to see that you have persevered and made it through Social Studies and recess. At the very least that should earn you a trip to Chuck E. Cheese. Also sleep well in the knowledge that the PlayStation is not dead yet, just fading. Maybe... just maybe... if you manage to skate through 7th grade in one year, mom will buy you a PS2... Then you can kiss college goodbye.

PRAISE FOR GRAVEYARD

Postmeister,

Please pass this letter on to The Judge.

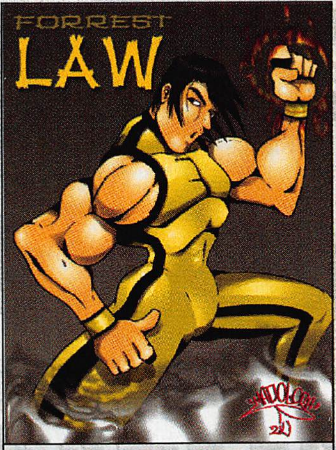
Hey Judge,

I was reading your magazine (March 2000) and I came across your article about the game *Pirates! Gold* (Genesis). I was so happy that someone else had not only heard or seen the game but also thought it was a great game. I was introduced to the game by Sega Channel (remember that fun?) and I have been looking to buy a copy of it since. Please help! I also love *Shadowrun* and I have a copy of that game and still play it quite often on my Nomad

The Wolf
Springfield, OR

Hello Wolf,

This is The Judge. I am glad you liked my write-up on Pirates! Gold *and* Shadowrun. *Both games are simply amazing. I am not the only supporter of Pirates in the office, though. Eggo, too, is an avid fan. There has been much heated debate around its standing in our upcoming Genesis all-time list. Eggo and I are battling ECM for a top slot for this little gem. As far as getting ahold of a cart, it all depends on what you are willing to spend. eBay has many for sale, most with no map, some with no box and even fewer in pristine condition. I am still looking for a personal copy!*



Andy C. Madolora of Wahiawa, HI is becoming a regular contributor to Posty.

FURY HATH NO HELL?

Posty,

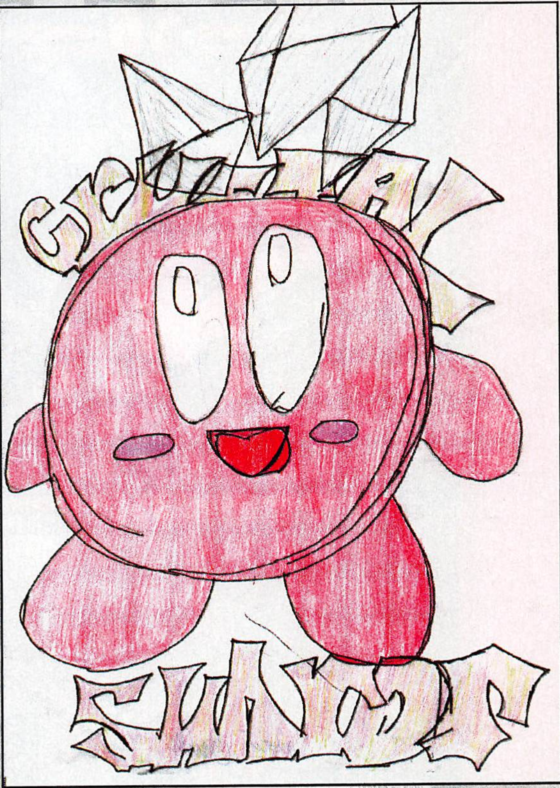
I'm a great fan of you and the magazine, but why do you guys always make fun of Fury? Anyway, will there ever be a *Time Crisis* for the Dreamcast???

Dave Ventura

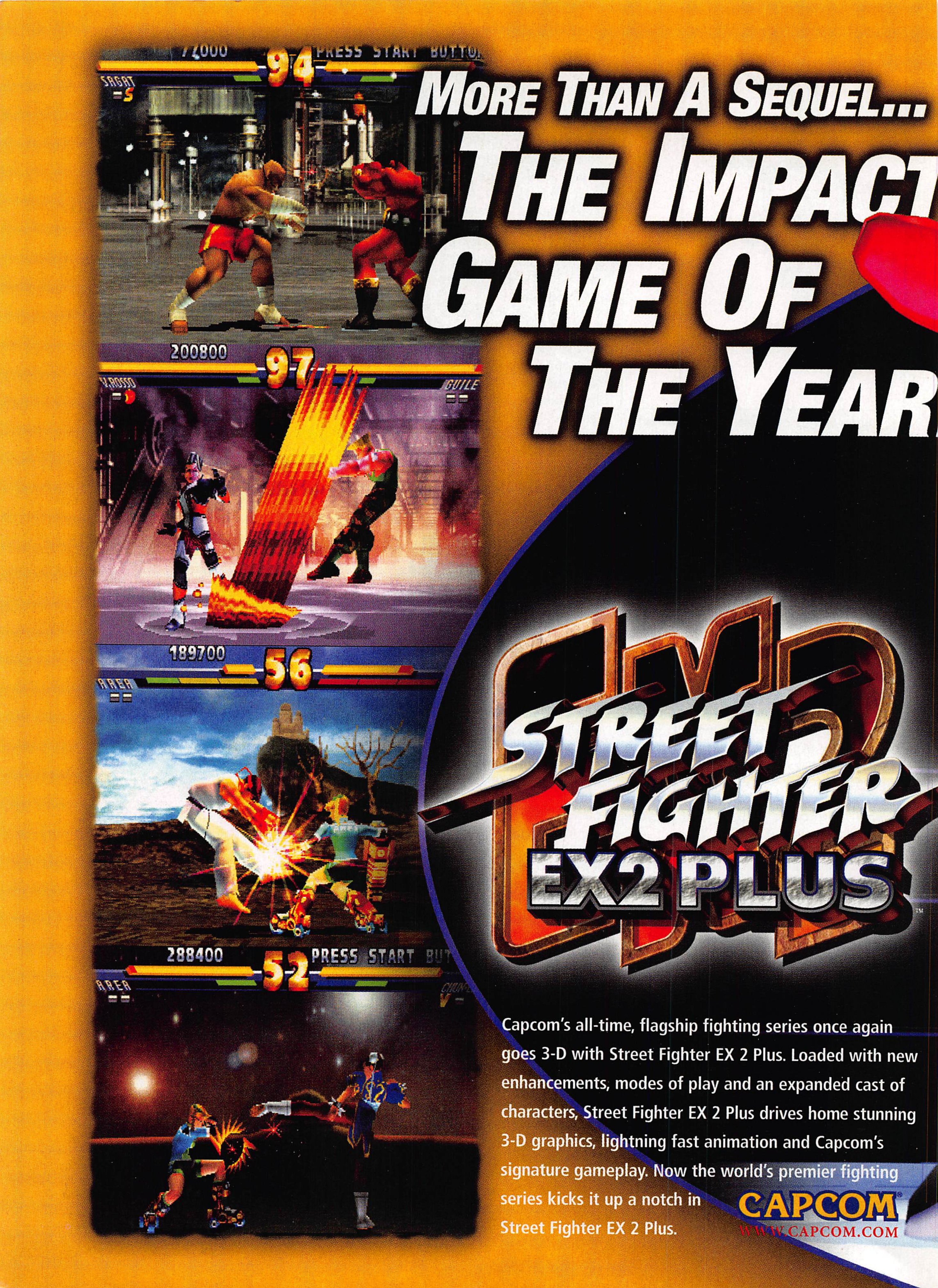
Dave,

Ah yes, Fury. What can I say, Dave, the homo sapien is, by nature, a predatory animal. Our instinct to prey on the weak is exhibited in our ribbing of Fury. More kernels of "wisdom" have been uttered by this fabled GameFan editor than any other (and we had to endure The Enquirer). So as our winged fowl, as our lame gazelle, as our Screech, Fury will remain the butt of our jokes as we exercise our primal urge to cull the herd.

Oh, and by the way, Time Crisis *ain't comin' any time soon.*



Abasi Charles, who is currently residing in the Children's Hospital of Boston, loves his Kirby. Hope you feel better Abasi! I myself have this damn zit that is driving me nuts...


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